DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 299 018 PS 017 451

TITLE	School-Age Child Care: Technical Assistance Papers, Numbers 1-7.
INSTITUTION	Wellesley Coll., Mass. Center for Research on Women.
SPONS AGENCY	Illinois State Dept. of Children and Family Services, Springfield.
PUB DATE	Jan 88
NOTE	48p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Disabilities; Educational Quality; Elementary Education; Financial Support; Guidelines; Personnel Management; Program Administration; *Program Development; *Program Implementation; *School Age Day Care

ABSTRACT

Collected are seven technical assistance papers concerning the development and implementation of community school age day care programs. The first paper provides a step-by-step guide to organizing a school-age child care program and the second paper focuses on developing a high quality program. Paper 3 explores administrative, policy, and legal issues related to running an effective program. The fourth paper discusses financial management of programs and the fifth indicates ways of finding the money needed to operate the program. Paper 6 discusses aspects of serving children with special needs in a school-age child care program. Paper 7 discusses personnel issues. Each paper lists sources of additional information. (RH)

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School-Age Child Care

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPERS

ED299018

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

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Over the past two decades, dramatic changes in the working patterns of families have contributed to an ever-increasing need for child care services. Six out of every ten mothers of preschool and school-age children are in the labor force. One of the consequences of this change in labor trends is that there are a large number of children who now need before- and after-school child care or summer care when school is not in session.

Although there has been a growth in the number of school-age child care programs in Illinois, we still have areas of the state where parents who must work are forced to leave their children unattended.

Planning and implementing a school-age child care program is a complex and detailed task. Individuals, school districts, community groups, and social service agencies are needed to network to facilitate, support, and promote the development of such programs.

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services has been a leader in providing consultation and technical assistance to assist communities in the start-up and operation of school-age child care programs. Technical assistance papers have been developed to outline major steps in program development and offer suggestions on how to develop high quality programs. We hope these will be a focus point for individuals, school districts, employers, community groups, and social service agencies in planning new school-age child care programs.

These technical assistance papers were prepared for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services by the School-Age Child Care Project at the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

The School-Age Child Care Project was initiated in 1979 in response to the expressed needs of parents, school administrators, child care providers, and local and state policymakers for information and assistance in understanding the "latchkey" problem and in developing options for services and policies. The Project conducts research, designs educational programs and conferences, and provides consultation and technical assistance.

January 1988 Technical Assistance Paper Number 1

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Getting Started:

A Step-by-Step Guide to Organizing a School-Age Child Care Program in Your Community

James R. Thompson, Governor

Gordon Johnson, Director

During the first week of school in September, an 8 year old boy comes home after school and waits for his mother's 5:30 arrival, but he's bored, lonely and sometimes scared. His mother finds herself at a loss trying to be both a good parent and a good employee. She knows other parents must be facing similar circumstances.

An elementary school principal receives a dozen calls from frantic parents. They ask what they are to do. When their children leave day care to begin kindergarten, the children's day ends at noon, but parents must still work until 5:30 P.M. The principal does not think the school district should necessarily take on this problem, but wonders if anyone else will.

Social workers at the local mental health agency notice the effects of stress on today's families. They want to help out others interested in providing proper supervision for children and peace of mind for their parents.

There is a role for you to play in helping to build and improve the supply of school-age child care, whether you are a parent, a day care director, a school administrator, a United Way volunteer, a school teacher, a Cooperative Extension Service staff person, a member of your local League of Women Voters, or simply an interested citizen or professional. Where do you look for allies in planning to establish school-age child care services? How do you overcome opposition to your proposals? And how do you mobilize your community's resources to develop the finest program possible?

No single institution in our society has taken on the responsibility of caring for school-age children during the hours and days when school is closed and parents are at work. This means that care of school-age children can fall between the cracks, leaving parents and children to face the difficult possibility of "self-care," or leaving a child home alone for hours each day. On the other hand, the door is wide open to the creative contributions of many different groups and individuals, working collaboratively to build quality programs for school-age children.

This booklet will take you through the process of getting a school-age child care program started. There is no one right way to make it happen, no recipe for guaranteed success. But there are a number of steps which people who have developed these programs in their communities have found to be extremely useful.

Step 1. Form A Task Force

Regardless of which of the above categories you fall into, you will benefit from

talking to others who have a variety of perspectives on this issue. Make an effort to contact the kinds of organizations that you believe may be motivated to address this issue, and begin to identify individuals who seem particularly knowledgeable and committed to moving forward on it.

Find others who share your concerns, who confirm your perceptions that the need for school-age child care is a pressing reality, and who may also want to start a program. Talk with the staff of preschool day care centers and community agencies, such as Y's and Boys' and Girls' Clubs. Think broadly and creatively about who might want to be involved. The Junior League, League of Women Voters, Chamber of Commerce, and mental health agencies have all played a part in promoting school-age child care in some communities. Parents, youth-serving or social service agencies, and schools all benefit from working together.

Your first step is to form an action group or task force of "prime movers." Figure (1) is a resource list of individuals and groups you should approach as you prepare to call your first meeting, where you will form the task force (sometimes called a planning committee.)

FIGURE 1

School-Age Child Care Resource List

- Parents and parent groups, including parent-teacher organizations.
- Religious organizations: councils, boards, clergy, members.
- Local advocacy groups, especially those involved with children's issues.
- School personnel:
  1. Principals, teachers, social workers.
  2. Central administation: superintendents, school boards; other administrative bodies.
- Departments of community education (sometimes called community schools).
- Recreation departments.
- Federal, state, county agencies, especially those that are advocates of children and/or that may provide resources for children with special needs.
- Local agencies, especially those connected with child care and children's services. Some of these may be responsible for issuing licenses to child care programs.
- Local licensing bureaus: health, fire, etc.
- Other child care centers: proprietary and nonproprietary.
- Citizens' councils.
- Members of state, county, local governments.
- Special groups in your community: for example, League of Women Voters, Lions, Kiwanis.
- Other professional people: for example, staff of universities, lawyers and accountants to help with specific tasks.
- Representatives from local industry and business.

Step 2. Conduct A Needs Assessment Survey.

Very few communities in the United States have an adequate supply of child care for school-age children, and most parents are well aware of this. But there are other important players – mayors, the city council, the school board and school superintendent, and business leaders – who may need to be convinced of the need for a program.

One of the best ways to convince these policy makers of the validity of your efforts is by gathering compelling, clear documentation of the community's need for a school-age child care program. Ordinarily, this is done by means of a needs assessment survey, a brief questionnaire filled out by parents of school-age children. See Figure (2) for an example.

The usefulness of a needs survey goes beyond the goal of convincing local "movers and shakers" of the need for services. Its results can be easily turned into a press release and used to attract publicity for your efforts. And it can provide information to aid in the planning process as you move forward in designing a program.

You may want to recruit one or all of the following groups to help carry out the actual work of the survey, or to lend their name to the cover letter:

- Cooperative Extension Service
- Local planning councils
- Youth bureaus
- Civic groups (e.g., League of Women Voters)
- United Way
- Universities and colleges
- School districts
- PTAs

Before you conduct your needs assessment, take a look at the data that has already been collected on your community. The current edition of the *U.S. Census of Population and Housing* will have general demographic data, including the number of children by age group, number of parents in the workforce, and income characteristics, and can be found in your local public library. Check with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, and the planning and community development offices of your town or county for statistics and other valuable information for the planning process.

Veterans of the printed survey method will attest that **retrieval** is the greatest

FIGURE 2

After-School Child Care Survey

	Child One	Child Two	Child Three	Child Four
1. Grade (K-8)	____	____	____	____
School	____	____	____	____
Age	____	____	____	____
2. What does your child/children do after school?				
a. Home with parent(s)	____	____	____	____
b. Home with adult relative (i.e. grandparent, aunt, etc.)	____	____	____	____
c. Home with adult babysitter	____	____	____	____
d. Home alone	____	____	____	____
e. Home with brother/sister	____	____	____	____
f. Outside home in after-school child care program	____	____	____	____
g. Other arrangements (such as lessons, clubs, sports, etc.) Please explain for each child	____	____	____	____
3. How do you feel about what he/she does after school?				
a. Very satisfied	____	____	____	____
b. Satisfied	____	____	____	____
c. Not satisfied. Why?	____	____	____	____
4. How does your child/children feel about what he/she does after school?				
a. Very satisfied	____	____	____	____
b. Satisfied	____	____	____	____
c. Not satisfied. Why?	____	____	____	____
5. What things are most important to you about your child's/children's after-school care?				
a. Cost	____	____	____	____
b. Location	____	____	____	____
c. Transportation	____	____	____	____
d. Adult nearby	____	____	____	____
e. Types of activities	____	____	____	____
f. Care on school holidays/release days	____	____	____	____
g. Staff qualifications	____	____	____	____
h. Other – please explain	____	____	____	____
6. What do you currently pay per week for your child's/children's after-school care?				
a. Nothing	____	____	____	____
b. $1 - $15 per week	____	____	____	____
c. $16 - $35 per week	____	____	____	____
d. $36 - $45+	____	____	____	____

Please use the back of this form to comment on further needs or problems not addressed by this questionnaire. Also, if you would like to be contacted with more information concerning after-school child care options, please write your name and address on the back.

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problem in getting reliable information; people don't like to fill out forms. You will get a higher return rate if your questionnaire is **brief.** The survey should be **simple** to answer and designed so that the information you receive from it can be easily analyzed, compiled, and summarized. One community got an excellent response by distributing surveys through the schools, and then rewarding children – with stickers – who brought their's back promptly.

Your group will probably want to design its own needs assessment form, tailored to the specific information needed in your community. Be sure to include a cover letter which states the purpose of the survey and who is responsible. The name and phone number of at least one **contact person,** and a **deadline** for returns are also important. Make it clear that the survey is an **exploration,** and in **no** way a promise that a program will definitely be established.

Step 3. Look At Community Resources

In one community, a school district provided the space for a program, the County Extension Service provided the curriculum design and staff selection, and the adult education center acted as the fiscal authority. This is one of innumerable examples of partnerships in the field of school-age child care.

Consider the various sources of assistance and cooperation in your community churches, schools, business associations, social service agencies, a recreational facility, the regional child care licensing office, voluntary groups such as the Junior League, the Cooperative Extension Service, preschool day care centers, public libraries, and Foster Grandparents.

Consider the ways that **community/school collaborations** can maximize the use of already-existing resources. In considering how you might collaborate with the schools, remember that there exists a wealth of possibilities that range along a continuum, from schools that want to administer their own program to those that are willing to transport children to a center or family day care home after school. It is not necessary to have your program located in a school to collaborate financially with one. Programs may work in tandem with the schools by sharing transportation costs, purchasing low-cost meals from school-run kitchens, participating in their bulk purchasing of supplies, sharing staff, and so on. Community schools or adult education departments may be another school resource. Be certain to explore all of the possibilities.

Step 4. Decide To Go Ahead

It is usually easy to answer the question, "Is there enough need to justify a program?" The answer, almost invariably, is yes. But do you have the resources – facilities, support, and money from projected parent fees or subsidies – that will make it possible to run a good program? Keep in mind that not everyone who has indicated an interest in the program will necessarily use it once you open; in fact, experienced providers have found that, of the affirmative responses on a needs

survey, 20 to 30 percent are likely to actually enroll. On the other hand, many large, successful, multi-site programs originally began with 10 or 15 children in one space.

Find out if there is an **existing program** that could be changed or expanded to fill the need for school-age child care. The following organizations have all sponsored school-age child care programs:

- day care centers
- school districts
- city parks or recreation departments
- churches
- youth-serving agencies (Y's, girls' clubs)
- community agencies (settlement houses, ethnic and cultural organizations)

If you do not find an existing agency which seems right for you, you must decide if you are ready to begin the exciting but difficult process of creating a new organization. The task force may want the assistance of an attorney in completing the following legal tasks:

1. Incorporation of the organization.
2. Development of bylaws.
3. Application for tax exempt status (if appropriate).

Consult **"Administrative, Policy, and Legal Issues," Technical Assistance Paper No. 3,** for more information on developing a new organization.

Step 5. Design Your Program

Before you get down to the details of program design, you need to develop a philosophy which will serve as the framework for all that follows. A philosophy is your common-sense answers to the questions, "What do the children in this program need?" and "What do we want to give them?"

Consider the developmental needs of school-age children for: a base of warmth and security, opportunities to develop their initiative and independence, encouragement of their creativity, and clear limits and expectations of their behavior. Parents are looking for a safe place, where their children will receive adequate supervision. They also want a program which is affordable, and which respects their values and cultural background. More information on developmentally appropriate programming can be found in **Technical Assistance Paper No. 2, "Developing a High Quality School-Age Child Care Program."**

In designing the program, you will need to answer each of the following questions, keeping in mind that it is easiest to begin with something that you feel you can do and do **well,** work out the kinks and the details, and let the program grow organically.

Who Will Attend the Program?

You must decide the ages of children the program will serve, priorities for enrollment or eligibility (if any), and the number of children you will enroll. Think about whether your program can be designed to serve children with physical, emotional, and cognitive disabilities.

To some extent, the size of your program will be limited by the availability of affordable space. You also need to consider *group size*, the total number of children assigned to a team of caregivers in an individual room, and *staff:child ratio*, the number of caregivers divided by the group size. Illinois licensing standards stipulate a minimum ratio of 1 staff person for each 20 children, and a maximum group size of 30, but many programs maintain a lower staff:child ratio, such as 1:10 or 1:14.

The tradeoffs with both staff:child ratios and group size revolve around issues of cost and quality. Larger groups with higher ratios may certainly be less expensive, but they minimize the individualized attention and the activity choices open to children. Smaller groups with more stringent ratios cost more, but allow for more staff attention to each child and a broader range of activities.

When Will The Program Operate?

Some programs provide care before and after school, and for 10 hours or more per day during school holidays and summer vacation. Others may be open only from three to six P.M. on school days. Still others provide care during school vacations but close for the summer. Other considerations are snow days, part time care, and drop-in care.

While year-round care covering the entire day may be what most working parents need, you will also have to consider the costs involved in each option and the stipulations of your space agreements.

Where Will The Program Be Housed?

If there is any one area of program design that is inextricably linked to all the others, it is the space you choose for the program. Look for free or low-cost space, so that you can save your limited financial resources for other expenses, such as staff and supplies. Possible spaces for school-age child care programs include:

- schools (public, private, no longer in operation)
- churches and synagogues
- community and municipal agency buildings (Y's, youth centers, libraries, etc.)
- nursery schools and day care centers
- commercial property (storefronts, space in industrial parks)

The program must be located close enough to the children's school for easy daily commuting and be convenient to the homes of families who will use the program. Illinois licensing standards require a minimum of 35 square feet of indoor space per child. Outdoor space must be large enough to accommodate 25 percent of the licensed capacity at 75 square feet per child.

Many school-age child care programs share a room with a kindergarten, preschool program, or art class. However, it is preferable that at least **some** space belong to the school-age child care center alone. This gives the children a sense that the program is really theirs.

School-based programs are often the most viable, from the viewpoints of cost, accessibility, and program environment, but if this is not true in your neighborhood, think creatively as you explore other options. Although a given space may not *appear* to be a likely home for your program, ingenuity and a little money may transform it completely. Figure (3) outlines the most common options, with the tradeoffs they present from the perspective of the different constituencies.

Whatever your particular situation, it is important to **clarify** the agreement concerning your space in **writing,** stipulating exactly which space your program will use for what days and hours, whether you will be permitted to make alterations, which supplies and equipment you can use and the responsibilities of each party, including costs.

FIGURE 3

Advantages and Disadvantages of Major Options

	Advantages	Disadvantages
SCHOOLS		
Facilites	Extends function of schools; enhances image; builds parent support. May increase enrollment or help with desegregation efforts.	Another program to worry about; fears regarding liability, accountability, and costs.
Needs of Children	Familiar and suitable space; oriented for school-agers; availability of additional spaces – gym, lunchroom, playground, etc. Convenient – no long bus rides – and allows maximum time to be spent in program; in child's own neighborhood; may give continuity to child's day.	Same environment all day; institutional restrictions and limitations; possible negative associations with school accrue to program.
Needs of Parents	No transportation costs or worries; consider school a "safe" place; deal with one environment/institution; program easily accessible for pick-up; affordable.	May have negative feelings about school.
Needs of Staff	Allows communication between school teachers and SACC staff.	School personnel may not welcome staff; may lack access to cooking and food preparation facilities; staff may need to "take down" the program daily.
Needs of Community	Draws people to public schools and to the community. Good use of taxpayers' dollars.	Use may be questioned by private sector or taxpayers.
Needs of Programs	No transportation costs; may have flexible locations to meet changing needs; custodian, facilities, equipment, utilities are already on premises; building set up for SACC; has potential for lowest cost to program; well located with access to other city resources.	Space is often shared or has common usage; SACC program may be moved if school activities are seen as taking precedence; storage space may be limited; program may be unable to alter or change space; may be unavailable during summers, vacations (or costs may increase dramatically).
CHURCHES/SYNAGOGUES		
Facilites	Generates income for institution; gesture of good will and community involvement.	Daily use by children may be hard on facility; may limit other activities.
Needs of Children	New space they haven't been at all day; may be equipped for use by children; may feel "less institutional."	May not have adjacent outdoor space; have to walk or be transported to site; may be unknown territory.
Needs of Parents	May be in the neighborhood for many families.	Cost of space may be high; transportation may be complicated and/or costly; some parents may be uncomfortable with "religious" location; may not be convenient for some families.
Needs of Staff	More autonomy; don't have to be part of school environment if don't want to; cooking facilities are usually available.	May have to set up and take down weekly; may have constraints due to other uses of space; no contact with school personnel.
Needs of Community	Use of already-existing community facility.	Might limit other uses of space.
Needs of Programs	Generally open and available year round; rent may be subsidized.	Need for transport; costs for space may be high and may need to pay for maintenance, utilites, etc.; use of building by others during program time may limit program; licensing may be costly or problematic.
COMMUNITY AND MUNICIPAL AGENCIES/ BUILDINGS		
Facilities	May tie in with other programs at agency; may enhance reputation; may add to usage figures and membership; may be a multiple use of facility; additional revenue.	May limit other activities from using space.
Needs of Children	New space they haven't been in all day; may have excellent facilities (pool, gym) for children.	Need to be transported or to walk; may have lots of other programs going on; may not be close to home or school.
Needs of Parents	May be well located for many families.	Children will need to walk or be transported; may not be convenient for some families.
Needs of Staff	May have excellent facilities at their disposal; more autonomy; don't have to be part of school environment if don't want to.	May not have exclusive use of space; may not be welcome by other staff; no contact with school personnel; may have other constraints due to other uses of space.

(Figure 3 continued on following page)

(Figure 3 continued from previous page)

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Needs of Community	Use of already-existing community facility.	Might limit other uses of space.
Needs of Programs	Generally open and available year round.	Costs for space may be high – may need to pay for maintenance, utilities; licensing may be costly or problematic; need for transport.
NURSERY SCHOOLS AND DAY CARE CENTERS		
Facilities	Additional revenue for institution; may provide option for "graduates."	May be unable to give exclusive use
Needs of Children	Space oriented to children; may be familiar to some of the children.	May be inappropriate space for older children; may be "bored" with space if attended preschool program; need to walk or be transported.
Needs of Parents	May be a known environment; may be convenient for some families.	May not be convenient for many families; transportation may be complicated and or costly.
Needs of Staff	More autonomy; don't have to be part of school environment if don't want to; cooking facilities may be available.	May not have exclusive use of space; no contact with school personnel; may have constraints due to other uses of space.
Needs of Community	Use of already-existing facility	
Needs of Programs	Generally open and available year round; may make better use of facility space; may help subsidize program rent; may already be licensed.	Space may not be appropriate for older children; transportation will be needed; may be costly; may not have exclusive use of space.

From *School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual*

How Will Children Get To and From the Program?

Some programs provide no transportation and are serving their parents and children well; others have extensive before- and after-school routes that cost thousands of dollars per year but are essential to their operation. Analyze your needs, and consider the following alternatives:

- Children walk to the program, unescorted
- Children walk to the program, escorted by staff
- Public transportation
- Parent carpools (for end-of-day pickup)
- Schools transport children
- Purchase or lease of van or bus
- Sharing vehicle of another agency
- Contract services of transportation or taxi company

If programs are licensed, standards require that vehicles providing transportation meet the Illinois Vehicle Code.

What Administrative Model Will Be Selected?

In developing an administrative structure, you can either adapt one of the following models or devise your own:

Administered by one agency:

- community agency, such as the Y
- independent nonprofit corporation formed by community groups or parents
- group of parents (or the PTA)
- preschool day care center
- government agency
- schools (public or private)
- community school programs

Administered collaboratively:

- parent group and public or private school
- community agency and public school
- community agency and community school department
- parent group and church
- city or town recreation department and school

More information about administrative organization can be found in **Technical Assistance Paper No. 3, "Administrative, Policy, and Legal Issues."**

Who Will Staff the Program?

The quality of your staff will have a direct impact on the quality of the program. Therefore, you want to pay the highest salaries possible to attract and keep the best personnel. Salaries represent approximately 70-85 percent of program costs. These guidelines are designed to help you make the most of limited resources:

- Hire staff who have prior experience, child-related training, and a commitment to school-age child care.
- Offer the best salary and benefits you can afford, even if it means fundraising.
- Ensure good working conditions: breaks, paid time off, opportunities for meaningful staff input.
- Consider hiring at least one full-time person.
- Supplement paid staff with free and low-cost help, from work-study students to foster grandparents.

For more information on recruitment, hiring, and supervision of staff, see **Technical Assistance Paper No. 7, "Finding and Keeping the Right Staff."**

What Are the Costs?

One of the most difficult struggles of designing your school-age child care program is the continual pull between the funds you have to spend (parent fees, grants, in-kind contributions, etc.) and the expenses facing you. From the results of your needs assessment survey, you can get a sense of what parents can afford to pay for school-age child care.

When you are opening a new program, you face two kinds of costs, each of which need their own budget. *Start-up costs* are those one-time-only expenses you will incur even before you begin to provide

child care. Examples of start-up expenses are renovation of space, purchasing of equipment and supplies, and staff salaries during the planning period. You should also have funds available to help carry you through the first six months, when underenrollment is common.

Your projected *annual operating budget*, on the other hand, is an estimation of your expenses and income for actually running an ongoing program which has achieved some stability. Operating expenses include staff salaries and benefits (about 80 percent of your budget), rent, equipment, materials and supplies, utilities, food, and administration. See **Technical Assistance Papers No. 4, "Financial Management,"** and **No. 5, "Resource Development,"** for more information on setting up a financial plan and acquiring funding for your program.

Step 6. Gain Approval

This is not really a single step, but rather an ongoing effort which will culminate in the "go-ahead" from a school board or other formal authority.

How do you begin? Identify key opinion leaders and decision-makers. If possible, enlist some of them onto your task force. These individuals will help you "get a foot in the door," lobby for you, and use their contacts and power on your behalf. They may be able to advise you on the best ways to approach policy-makers and how to avoid or undercut opposition. If you want to house your program in a school, you will want to obtain the informal support of as many people in that system as possible before you go for official approval.

During the approval process, you will need to attend to a number of legal and administrative issues. Depending on the structure you have chosen, you may need to begin the process of incorporation, obtain liability and other types of insurance, and apply for a license. Consult **Technical Assistance Paper No. 3, "Administrative, Policy, and Legal Issues,"** for further assistance.

Cultivate ties with the media from the earliest possible date. Your efforts are newsworthy and may be of great interest to local press and television reporters as well as radio talk show hosts.

If your program is to receive formal approval, this may occur through a public hearing process. Publicize the hearing and make sure supporters, especially **parents** who need and would use the program, are in the audience. Have a proposal prepared in writing, to show that you have a carefully designed program. Remember that legal protection and financial responsibility will be uppermost concerns to those you are approaching; anticipate questions and know the answers.

The written proposal can be very brief – a few pages – to very long and detailed, depending on the requirements of the approving body or funding agency. See Figure (4) for the outline of a funding proposal.

FIGURE 4

Funding Proposal Outline

1. Evidence of need
2. Statement of purpose (philosophy and goals)
3. Program information, including:
   a. location
   b. hours of operation
   c. age groups to be served
   d. costs and sources of funds
   e. accountability for day-to-day operation
4. Financial information
   a. projected annual revenues and expenses
   b. liability coverage
5. Evaluation of program

Step 7. Publicize The Program

Public relations work is not only a necessary part of establishing a school-age child care program, but of keeping it alive and well. Maintaining good relations with the public is vital to the survival and success of any program.

It often takes a long time before operation at full capacity is possible. This is partially because many parents adopt a "wait and see if this will be a good program" attitude. The best time for opening is the fall, with publicity and enrollment taking place during the previous spring. It is important to use every creative way possible to let the community know of this new service and to help build trust in its quality.

In the long run, your best source of PR will be the word-of-mouth advertising of satisfied customers – parents and children. Below are some other suggestions for effective outreach; you will probably need to employ several of them simultaneously.

A. Call and/or visit parents who indicated interest on the needs assessment. Keep a list of names and numbers of all those who made telephone inquires and follow them up.

B. Send fliers home with children through schools and religious classes. Send fliers to social service agencies; leave them at doctors' offices, supermarkets, etc.

C. Put posters up in supermarkets and other stores, in shopping malls, churches and synagogues, schools, libraries, laundromats, adult educations centers. Make them bright and easy to spot and read.

D. Write newspaper articles and press releases; invite local newspapers to visit your center's open house or program-in-progress.

E. Use radio and TV public service announcements: they're free! Additional free coverage by local news stations may be possible. Arrange to be interviewed. If local religious services include announcements of new community services, get the fact about your program opening to the ministers, priests, and rabbis.

F. Provide brochures. Programs that can afford to should have brochures made. Keep the brochure simple and attractive. Your aim is to attract attention, pique interest, and present basic facts.

G. Give an open house. You should hold your open house at a time that is most convenient for your prospective users. The director and staff members should be on hand.

H. Mail or distribute newsletters and bulletins through 4-H Clubs, churches, Y's or other community organizations, or put announcements in the publications put out by those groups.

Step 8. Enroll Children In The Program

By the time your publicity begins, you need to have enrollment policies and procedures in place. The enroll-

ment and application process involves communication between parents, children, and the program on a number of issues. To comply with licensing guidelines, you should be prepared to disseminate a number of written materials to parents prior to enrollment, including a statement of philosophy, description of the daily program, and policies regarding transportation, fee payment, and medical care.

Now is the time to make decisions regarding the application process, contact person, information required, preregistration fee or deposit, required visits or interviews, notification of admission, waiting list procedures, and trial enrollments.

You will probably want to establish a policy on admissions and discharge criteria. All programs that incorporate as nonprofit organizations must have policies that are non-discriminatory on the basis of race, sex, religion, creed, color, or national origin. Programs which receive public funds or use public facilities may be legally obligated not to refuse disabled applicants.

Enrollment priorities may be based on the child's age or grade; neighbor-

Enrollment priorities may be based on the child's age or grade; neighborhood or school; the family's employment or other status, such as level of income; children with special needs; or certain ethnic or racial minority groups. Programs receiving public funds may need to comply with the enrollment priorities of the funding source.

Step 9. Begin Operation

There is nothing quite like the feeling of watching a dream become a reality. Just a few months ago, the lack of school-age child care was troubling you and some of your neighbors. Soon (perhaps already) in the place of this concern will be a center filled with active, busy, thriving children. You have now traveled a long road, from the recognition of a problem to the creation of a solution, one which will serve many families in the years to come.

Don't be discouraged if the start is a small one; many a community has been won over by the success of a single, high quality, pilot program. As you open your doors for the first time, take a deep breath and congratulate yourselves – you deserve it!

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Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois #68106 — 7M — 4/88

January 1988 Technical Assistance Paper Number 2

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

A Fun Place To Be:

Developing a High Quality School-Age Child Care Program

James R. Thompson, Governor

Gordon Johnson, Director

Photo: Joellen Hillyer

Walk into a school-age child care program at 3:00 PM and you are likely to encounter a room full of activity. Children may be cooking spaghetti, building mylar kites, tinkering in a fix-it shop (stocked with "real" used machines), or simply talking in small groups. One group leader may be out in the playground, instructing children in the rules of a newly-purchased game. Another remains in the room, quietly talking over the events of the day with a child and providing assistance on a homework assignment. The children soon break down into groups and go off to swimming instruction or art classes.

What is School-Age Child Care?

The time that school children spend outside the classroom has always had great importance in their lives. When today's adults reflect on their own elementary school years, they may remember sports leagues, music and dance lessons, scout troops, newspaper routes, playing outdoors with friends, going to the library, receiving religious instruction, baby-sitting and a host of other formal and informal activities that occupied the hours and days that schools were not in session. Many of these endeavors depended on the availability of stay-at-home parents who could plan and supervise activities or at least transport children to and from them.

Economic and cultural changes have brought us to a new phase in our history. School-age children still have the same needs as in earlier generations for recreation, social contact and intellectual and cultural enrichment during their out-of-

school hours. But fewer families have the resources needed to meet those needs. We live in an era in which most jobs are outside the home, most two-parent households need two incomes to survive, and nearly half of all children will spend some portion of their childhood in a single-parent household. In this context, there is a diminishing pool of families in which there are parents available to tackle the enormous array of responsibilities associated with children's needs for constructive out-of-school leisure and recreation.

Thus the arrival of *school-age child care*. The term is used to describe a wide range of programs which are offered to children of school age during the hours before and after school and the holidays and vacations when schools are closed. Some school-age child care takes place at schools, some at community centers, some at parks or playgrounds or daycare centers. Some are designed only for students in kindergarten and the lower elementary grades; others include or are specifically designed for older children in middle school or the upper elementary grades. Some focus on arts, others on sports, others on field trips, still others on academics; many combine all of these and more.

Some of what we label *school-age child care* (or *SACC*) goes by different names: *extended day, school's out, latchkey, kids' clubs, after-school* are just some of the names which are used.

These school-age child care programs, no matter what they are called, have in common the fact that they are designed to offer safe, secure, places that children can go to on a regular basis when schools are not in session. Parents are then free to work, study, or pursue other interests knowing that their children's needs are being addressed.

What Are the Developmental Needs of School-Age Children?

School-age children have particular cognitive, social, physical, and emotional needs. See Figure 4 (page 7) for a list of some common characteristics of children in the elementary years.

School age children are beginning to develop a self-identity by comparing themselves with others. Being part of a group can add to the security of an

Photo: Lou Arcovio

identity; school age children will mold their behavior (or clothes or choice of activities) to gain the acceptance of those whom they desire as friends. School age children also build their identity through experience with adults. They need adults who can show them positive ways of coping with the world and role models who share their gender, race, and ethnic identity.

School-age kids are trying to make sense of the world around them and to figure out their place in it. So much of what happens to them each day is beyond their control. School age children categorize and classify, make rules and test boundaries, all in the interest of making sense of an overwhelming world. They like to collect, make up codes, and make up rules. Sometimes more time is spent arguing over the rules of kickball than on getting to first base.

Children learn best and have the most fun when they are busy with exploratory and productive activities which challenge them to learn new skills or try out novel ideas:

> Everything has to be concrete; everything has to be real. The school-age child is based in reality. It is at this time that children want to do real work, do real jobs, use real tools....Their sense of self-worth comes from accomplishing a job.
>
> (*School Age Notes*, Vol.IV, No.5)

Giving schoolagers real tools to perform real tasks will build their sense of competency – and reduce the frequency of complaints like "there's nothing to do around here." Timing is also important: a parent who arrives for pick-up to find her child absorbed in an art project is likely to encounter loud resistance. If school-age children are not permitted to finish their activities, they are likely to feel that they have failed.

How Can a School-Age Child Care Program Meet These Needs?

School-age child care provides a unique opportunity within an informal learning environment for children of varying ages to live and learn together. It is a chance to enrich what happens in school, allow children the time and place to develop interests and relationships, to venture out in new areas, or just curl up with a good book or favorite teddy bear.

People who are designing school-age child care programs need to consider that the children already spend many hours in school each day. From a child's point of view, the school day often means paying attention, following rules, being in a large group, sitting still and doing your "work." After school, children need some time to relax, stretch their bodies as well as their minds, and explore their own interests. In a school-age child care program, the child who does poorly in school may discover she excells at painting, and the one with good grades gets a chance to follow through on his interest in astronauts.

What Are the Components of a High Quality Program?

A good child care program is one with a "positive culture." Quality cannot be easily reduced to a checklist of caregiver: child ratio, curriculum content, or teacher training, although all of these are important parts of the whole. A successful program has qualified staff in low ratios, a well-designed space, and developmentally appropriate curriculum, yet the end result can not be easily reduced to a checklist. Children in the program find a "home-away-from-home" which meets their individual needs while helping them to feel a valued part of the group. It is a place where they can be themselves without fear of disapproval or ridicule. Yet equally, a place where the rules are simple, fair, and enforced, so those children who have difficulty maintaining self-control know that help is there when needed.

FIGURE 1

Tips on Sharing Space

1. **Purchase or build adaptable equipment:** portable room dividers, locked storage closets, and tables, chairs, cabinets, tables, and even sofas on wheels.

2. **Include set up and take-down time in the daily routine.** This may include hanging pictures on the wall, putting materials out on tables, rolling out rugs and rolling in "soft" furniture.

3. **Make sure there is clear agreement** about where each program will store equipment and supplies, who will clean the space, and the process for working out any conflicts which may arise. Regularly scheduled meetings, perhaps at the beginning and end of the school year, can help to clarify issues before they arise as problems.

4. **Develop "learning centers on wheels"** for art, library, dramatic play, and so on. Small rugs will help to establish boundaries between activity centers.

(Adapted from *School Age Child Care: An Action Manual*, and *School Age NOTES*, November/December 1984)

Photo: Lou Arcovio

How can you tell if a school-age program is providing good care? Walk into an afterschool program and look around. Are children engrossed in a variety of projects, a sense of busy productivity in the air? Do the caregivers use respectful language and an understanding tone of voice with the children? Are materials of different kinds – art, sports, building, board games, creative dramatics – visible and accessible to children? Is there space set aside for these different activities, either in the room itself or several areas in a building?

1. Caregivers

The adults who work with children are the single most important component of any program. Caregivers must be well-trained, and skilled in activities which are enjoyed by school-age children. They should have good self esteem, organizational skills, commitment and a sense of humor.

Good caregivers can create an atmosphere of safety, support, and caring in the program. To meet the physical, social, and emotional challenges which build a positive self-image, children need the security of knowing that someone is there to help if they fail. Children will recognize and respond to the respect and nurturing they receive from skilled staff.

2. Program Space

Problems with the physical environment are a major barrier to the development of high quality programming in many school-age child care centers. Children need to feel a sense of ownership of the program space. If children are to feel that a program is "theirs", they need a space which can be designed and decorated to reflect their needs, concerns, and personalities.

The necessity of sharing space with other programs is a fact of life for many school-age child care programs. It may be difficult for children to develop a sense of ownership of a place which is not only theirs. If you must share, try to find a compatible program. Many programs have devised strategies to make the best of the situation; see Figure (1) for some tips.

It is extremely difficult to serve school-age children's needs in a large space with few boundaries, such as a school cafeteria. If children are having behavior problems, inadequate or poorly designed space may be at the root of them.

3. Materials and Activities

School-age children need equipment and materials which will encourage their creativity, give them a sense of accomplishment, allow them to explore increas-

ingly complex ideas and materials. Materials should be made easily accessible, appropriate for the ages and abilities of children in the program, and in sufficient number. It has been estimated that, to keep free play periods contructive, a school-age child care program should have materials totalling five times the number of children in the program. It's important to vary the activity choices as well (see Figure 2).

Programs which serve older children – over 8 years of age – will need to pay special attention to the needs of these children, many of whom would prefer to be in a less supervised setting. Some programs set aside a certain space for the older children, a sort of "clubhouse" which helps them to feel that their relative maturity is respected. Older children may have particular privileges or responsibilities, such as tutoring in the homework area once a week. If children of varying ages attend the program together, it is important to provide activities which meet the interests and challenge the abilities of older children. One approach is to have special interest groups, or "clubs" which meet once or twice a week over a two or three month period. A newspaper, candle-making, or chess club will appeal to older children while younger children may enjoy a club for storytelling or working with clay.

4. Schedule

Children gain a sense of security when their environment is predictable. An established routine will provide the foundation on which staff and children can improvise. See Figure (3) for an example of what the schedule for a school-day afternoon might look like.

A weekly or monthly schedule of activities should be developed by staff with as much input as possible from the children. For example, meetings can be held to elicit ideas for the next round of clubs. The result, posted on the bulletin board and sent home with parents, will contribute to their sense of participation in the program.

Of course, school-agers love surprises too; why not move snack outside for a picnic on the first warm spring day? A fight on the playground may prompt an important group discussion; children absorbed in an art project may want to continue it on the following day; and the first snowfall will inevitably lead to hours of gleeful play in the out-of-doors.

FIGURE 2

Activities for School-Age Children

To serve the needs of school-age children, the program should provide the opportunity for:

Creative Dramatics: A room or area stocked with costumes, puppets, and props, for activities ranging from free (and silly) play to organized productions presented at "family night." A single area may be altered weekly or monthly, serving as a store, post office, pizza parlor, fix-it shop, zoo, or school.

Science: Magnifying glasses and microscopes, ant farms, plant experiments, color experiments, hamsters, magnets, and more can all be part of a science curriculum. Simple experiments which children can do themselves – such as using eyedroppers filled with food coloring to explore the properties of colors and water – can be changed regularly. Nature and environmental activities can be integrated into the program with neighborhood walks, scavenger hunts, trips to state parks and conservation areas. Special projects might include gardening, a clean-up day at a nearby park, or recycling.

Art: Have materials on hand which children can explore on their own, and a separate closet or shelf of items for use in teacher-supervised activities. Paint, glue, paper, felt, material scraps, wood pieces, clay, plaster of paris, markers, crayons, and so on should all be available. "Recycle" items are great fun; research the resources available in your community.

Quiet and Homework Area: Stocked with books of interest to the children in the program. Regular trips to the library can provide an changing collection. Comfortable furniture – a big soft chair, big pillows (a sewing project?), bean bag chairs, an old sofa – will add much in the creation of a soft, informal, cozy corner. Tables and chairs provide some structure for completing homework assignments. Children should be encouraged to do "peer tutoring" and have access to grown-up help when needed.

Small Group Games: School-age child-sized tables and chairs, with easy access to a variety of board games, cards, puzzles, and manipulative materials, will be used well and frequently. It is important that materials reflect the range of capabilities among the children.

Active, Large Group Space: An indoor space, such as a gym, should be available to the program on a regular basis. School-agers need sufficient outdoor space as well, preferably with climbing equipment such as "monkey bars" and areas for large group games. School-age children love active group games, from the old standbys – dodgeball, kickball, freeze tag – to "new games", a form of cooperative sports (see Resources section).

Special Events: Songfests, backwards day, multicultural festivals, crazy olympics, treasure hunts, drama and dance performance, spaghetti dinners and the like are all possibilities for activities which children can help to plan and carry out. They will add "spice" to a school-age child care program, and build a sense of community.

Other Areas: Use of a kitchen is a real boon to any program, as cooking is one of school age children's most popular past-times. A "life skills" area might include cooking, as well as career exploration, health and safety education, and activities focused on current events. If the program is in a school, access to the library, art room, and other areas can expand the horizons of the program. Programs located in or near a Y may be able to offer swimming as a regular part of their program.

5. Keys to Successful Programs

Planning is critical to a successful program. Good days don't just happen; they are made that way. Time should be set aside, at least once a week, for staff to sit down together and discuss upcoming activities.

During school vacations, when the program will be open for longer hours, additional planning is needed. This is a wonderful opportunity to do more long-term projects, such as writing a puppet show, making the puppets, and then giving a performance for the rest of the group (and perhaps some parents!)

Every program should provide children, on a daily basis, with the opportunity to:

- make choices
- participate in both small and large group activities
- use a wide variety of materials
- have privacy, alone or with a group of friends
- do things which are quiet and others that are active
- explore materials on their own
- participate in adult-directed, structured activities
- have free play

At least once a week, children need a chance to:

- participate in both long- and short-term projects
- go on a field trip - plan upcoming activities
- take some responsibility by serving snack, completing clean-up tasks, or helping plan next week's field trip.

Planning often works best when it builds on themes. Almost anything can be a theme, from "weather" to "jobs and careers" to "the circus." Staff and children, brainstorming together, will come up with a wide variety of activities from a single concept. Weather, for example, could include: a daily chart recording temperature, precipitation, and so on; a trip to the weather station; drawing a weather map; kite and paper airplane construction; a visit from a local meteorologist; learning songs; writing and reading stories about hurricanes and beach days; and construction of a weather station.

One theme which can be interwoven with many facets of a high quality program is multi-cultural education. By increasing their understanding of different cultures and races, children come to feel pride in their own heritage and community and to respect those of others. This is important in a racially homogeneous program, where children may not have many opportunities to experience the richness of diversity, as well as one which includes children from many different backgrounds.

Developing multi-cultural awareness is not simply a single activity, nor is it the celebration of a few holidays. A staff which includes people from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds is one indication of a commitment to multiculturalism. Such a commitment will also be reflected in the books chosen for the reading area, the kinds of snacks provided, and the respect which the staff show for parents from diverse cultural backgrounds. In a multi-cultural program, the concept of respect for others is easily expanded to include people with disabilities, and to encourage children to recognize and move out of sex-stereotyped behavior and activity choices.

FIGURE 3

A Typical Schedule

2:30 to 3:00
Arrival of children, time to talk to teachers one-on-one or in small groups about the school-day. Free play with three or more activities set out, which are varied daily, and access to the activity areas such as art, creative dramatics, and table games. Outdoor free play.

3:00 to 3:15
Group meeting, time to make activity choices for the afternoon, share ideas and experiences.

3:15 to 3:45
Snack. Depending on your philosophy (and maybe your space arrangements as well), this can be a family-style sit-down affair at small tables, or a more informal arrangement where children simply move to a central area to pick up some juice and crackers as they finish with other activities.

3:45 to 4:45
Small group activities. In accordance with your schedule, the activities will vary each day. Children should be given the opportunity to make choices about what they do with their afternoon time; activities which are appropriate to their age and abilities, build on their interests, and encourage exploration of new materials and topics. Both long- and short-term projects should be offered. Participating in a theater production will require a bigger commitment than, say, making pancakes, which will be done, (and consumed) by the end of the day.

4:45 to 5:30
Clean up and quiet activities. Table games, puzzles, homework, reading books and listening to records.

6. Utilization of Community Resources

A good school-age child care program is involved in and knowledgable about the surrounding community. Many benefits accrue to a community-aware program, from donations of goods (such as scrap paper from a nearby print shop) to positive publicity which will help secure a stable funding base.

Community resources include places to go, like libraries, parks, playgrounds, zoos, museums, factories, businesses, and farms. Other resources consist of organized youth-serving groups, such as Girl Scouts and 4-H, which can broaden the range of opportunities open to children in the program. Other times, community resources may be a person who visits the program, in the form of a Foster Grandparent, a veterinaran who comes in to talk about her job, or a local guitarist who spends Wednesday afternoons with the Music Club.

FIGURE 4

Characteristics of School-Age Children

Cognitive:

"Rule-bound": may spend more time deciding and debating the rules than playing the game.

Learn quickly, memorize easily.

Can concentrate for increasingly long periods of time on activities which interest them.

Need time and space to explore ideas, develop interests.

Lots of energy for learning, but may be turned off to school.

Enjoy playing games: surprising capacity to memorize and strategize.

Need to categorize and classify everything.

Not particularly interested in abstract symbols or ideas.

Social:

Peer group very important and influential.

Often form intimate attachments to one or two best friends; able to look past own needs to comfort, entertain, please others.

Adults other than parents gain in importance.

Strong desire to make and keep friends.

Growing sensitivity to the needs and desires of others.

Desire increasing responsibility, opportunities to try out adult roles.

May have strong ideas about likes and dislikes, who they want to be with and what they are interested in doing.

Physical:

Lots of energy.

Like physical challenges.

Need to build skills.

Physical prowess gives a sense of independence.

Skill-building builds self-esteem.

Emotional:

Usually resilient; get upset easily and get over it.

Need to know that adults are in control, even if they are not.

Increasingly self-conscious and self-critical.

May have difficulty verbalizing feelings, especially difficult ones like rejection and sadness.

Very concerned with fairness: extreme sense of justice and morality; see right and wrong as absolutes.

Gain self-confidence through successful completion of concrete tasks and products.

Gain self-esteem by being "good" at something; need to build skills.

Will tend to work out anxieties, fears, and feelings by "acting out" or withdrawing. Will often honestly answer "I don't know" when asked why they did something.

Need adult support, nurturance, reassurance, encouragement, and limit-setting to help them feel safe and secure.

Need to be valued as special, accepted as part of a group.

Using community resources means creating links with other child care and human service programs. In one city, an afterschool program joined up with three local preschool day care centers to write a funding proposal to the local arts council. A puppeteer, a musician, a dancer, a craftsperson, a storyteller, and a kitemaker visited each program that summer, enriching the children's enjoyment of creative arts. At summer's end, the whole community was invited to a concert with folksinger Ella Jenkins.

Children need continuity between the different facets of their lives, including home, school, and neighborhood. To feel proud of who they are, they need to understand and respect the place where they live. Many school-age programs have developed successful curriculum units on "Neighborhood Awareness", which include walking tours, photography sessions, oral histories with older family members and neighbors, and the construction of a giant three-dimensional map of the area. Venturing out helps children gain a sense of responsibility to their community and the security of belonging. Some programs have set up weekly trips to a nursing home, where children build relationships across the generations. Or a group may become involved in cleaning up a nearby park. Learning about workplaces is important for children, and visiting somebody's on-the-job parent is best of all!

What Role Do Parents Play in a School-Age Child Care Program?

Good programs recognize that building strong relations with parents is a necessary and important task of developing a high quality experience for children and their families. Caregivers should check in frequently with parents, by phone or in person during pick-up time, and should set up meetings whenever a more in-depth conversation is required. Mutual trust will be enhanced when caregivers respect the needs and values of parents, maintain regular contact, and encourage parents' participation in the program.

Parents should be involved in designing the program and setting policies, either as members of the Board of Directors or an advisory council. Parents will be powerful supporters of a program which they

Photo: Joellen Hillyer

understand and care about, helping out with fundraising, building new bookshelves on a child care program "work day," coming in for an afternoon to share their special skills with the children, and spreading good publicity through word-of-mouth. To build parent involvement, programs can:

1. **Send out a monthly parent newsletter.**
2. **Have parent participation** on the Board or Advisory Council.
3. **Put up a parent bulletin board,** with notices, reminders, and notes about the day.
4. **Encourage parent visits** at any time, and send out special invitations for field trips and events.
5. **Hold parent-teacher conferences** once or twice a year.
6. **Schedule family events,** such as picnics and dance or drama presentations by the children.
7. **Have regular parent meetings.** To increase attendance, start off with a pot-luck dinner and provide supervision for children during the meeting.
8. **Invite parents in to share their special skills or experiences,** for example, immigrants can come in to talk about life in another country, a carpenter might build bookshelves with the "Woodshop" club, and other parents make a visit to talk about their jobs as part of a curriculum unit on "Work" (see "Made by Human Hands," under Resources).
9. **Go on an annual camping trip.**

(adapted from "Encouraging Parent Participation in School-Age Programs, Shelly Bokman, *School Age NOTES*, March/ April, 1984, pp. 12-13.)

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Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois #86106 — 7M — 4/86

January 1988 Technical Assistance Paper Number 3

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Administrative, Policy and Legal Issues

Running an Effective School-Age Child Care Program

James R. Thompson, Governor

Gordon Johnson, Director

Part I. Organizational Structures

Every program has an organizational structure, whether it has been carefully drawn up in writing or simply evolved over the course of many months. A good administrative structure sets up clear lines of accountability and authority. It should be well-developed enough to ensure that people both within and outside the organization know who is responsible for what.

Many programs are jointly administered by two or more groups, who form a partnership. Such collaborations generally consist of a school's contribution of space and other resources to a program which is administered by another group or organization. It takes *time, compromise,* and *communication* to make a partnership work. Most collaborations must deal with four major issues:

1. School policy on the **use of space** by outside groups.
2. **Accountability** (who is responsible for the program and for any liability in case of injury to child or staff).
3. **Financial arrangements** for use of space and other resources.
4. The **impact of the program** on the day-to-day operation of the school.

See Figure (1) for some tips on maintaining a good partnership.

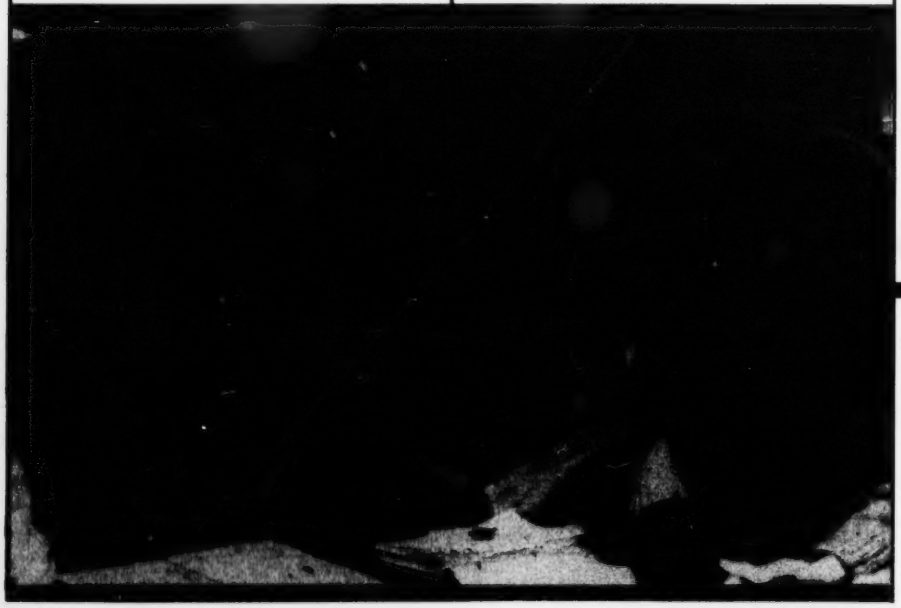


Photo: Joellen Hillyer

FIGURE 1

Five Tips for Partners

1. Lines of responsibility and costs are agreed upon by all and are in **writing.**

2. Make **consistency a goal.** Everyone involved in your partnership should have at least one meeting at the beginning of the program year, including custodial staff, secretaries, and school personnel who may be sharing space with you.

3. There should be a procedure for real, meaningful involvement and input of **parents.**

4. **Communication** is the key to success in a partnership effort. Keeping the principal informed is among the most important tasks of the program staff.

5. **Invite school personnel** into the program area. In one program, the school-age child care program invites all the teachers, lunch aides, janitors, and administrative staff of the school to a day care open house in the fall.

What is the decision-making body for your program? A board of directors? The school or church board? The agency administrator?

If your program has a **Board of Directors,** the members may be parents, staff, and community members whose skills, interests, and awareness of day care issues and children and families meet the goals and needs of the program. Some "experts,"

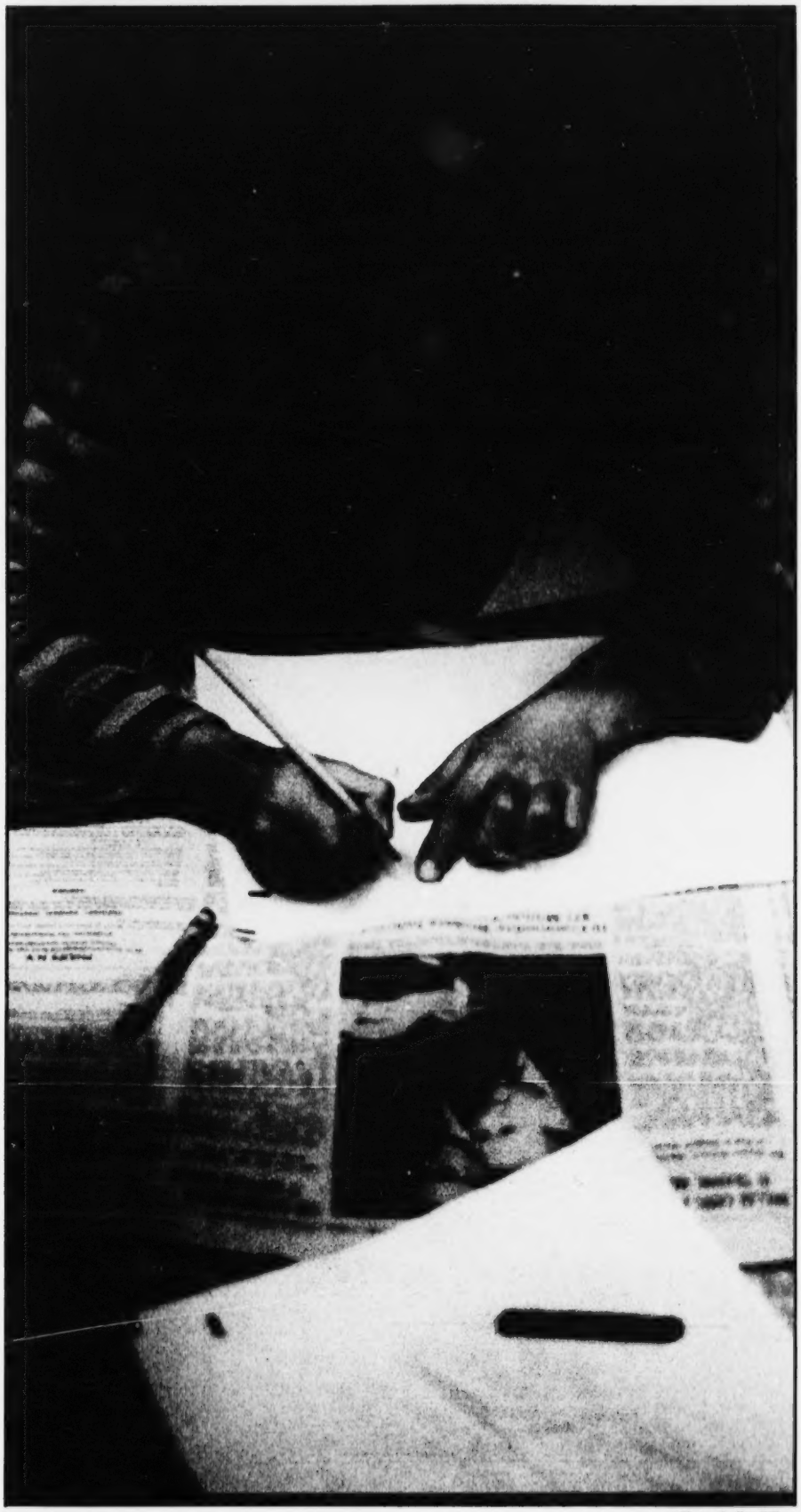


Photo: Joellen Hillyer

in areas such as law, health, child development, and finance, can be very useful to the program. The administrative tasks a Board of Directors should carry out are to:

- **Establish a program philosophy;** decide on program policies such as population served, balance of races and sexes, personnel policies; make policy statements.
- **Establish the board's scope of authority:** the program's bylaws, parent participation requirements; the program's role in relation to other agencies or partner institutions; decisions on size, scope of the program.
- **Establish a managerial function.** Through standing or ad hoc committees, the board selects a director, participates in hiring other staff, prepares or approves a budget and manages finances; seeks to raise funds, designs scholarship or other financial assistance mechanisms; complies with applicable local, state, and federal laws.

Parents can be involved in policy setting in different ways, ranging from running the program entirely to serving on an advisory committee which reviews policy made by another body. Many programs have advisory boards in addition to their governing body. For instance, in the case of one school-sponsored program, the school committee is the legal authority, but many program policies are decided by a parent council.

The overall task of managing the program is usually in the hands of a **program director.** Multi-site programs need to have a **site director,** who may also work directly with children, depending on the size of the program. Boards delegate a good deal of the daily routine of running the program — and daily decision making — to the program director.

Administrators have often been active in day care advocacy organizations, where both preschool and school-age child care issues are addressed. In some areas, school-age child care directors have joined together to form an association or support group. See Figure (2) for a list of organizations in Illinois which might be of interest. Such groups can provide:

- **Sharing of information and technical assistance.** In the Chicago area, several groups have joined to form a

consortium and now are providing state-funded training for school-age staff.

- **Sharing of resources and personnel.** Food, equipment supplies, or transportation might be purchased in bulk.
- **Political and moral support.** A united group of program representatives makes a compelling showing when it counts. The pooled energies and resources of this group can get parents out to attend public meetings or attract media attention.

FIGURE 2

Illinois Child Care Advocacy Organizations

Chicago Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC)
Suite 525
410 S. Michigan
Chicago, IL 60605
(312) 427-5399

Day Care Action Council of Illinois
Suite 726
4753 North Broadway
Chicago, IL 60640
(312) 561-7900

Voices for Illinois Children
Suite 515
53 W. Jackson
Chicago IL 60604
(312) 427-4080

Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children (ILAEYC)
for current membership information:
National Association for the Education of Young Children
1834 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington DC 20009
(800) 424-2460 toll free

Part II. Setting Policies

Who is responsible for enrollment? Do you hold personal interviews? What children are eligible? Do you accept applications by mail? What information do you require and how is it be kept on file?

From the questions above, it is clear that many policies must be set even before you can begin to enroll children. Every program needs to have clearly established policies on a number of subjects, as well as the procedures that will be used to carry them out. These are the nitty-gritty, day-by-day courses of action upon which the wheels of the program run. Some of the areas which require policies are:

- Admitting and enrolling children
- Setting the days and hours of operation
- Transportation
- Health and safety
- Food
- Behavior Management
- Parent Involvement
- Personnel
- Financial
- Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect

Every program's policies and procedures will be unique, in reflection of the individual program philosophy, the design of the child care services, and the nature of the surrounding community. Some policies will be guided or determined by external sources. For example, Illinois Licensing Standards have detailed requirements regarding the administration of medication to children.

While you will want to develop your own policies, it is not necessary to reinvent the wheel. See Figure (3) for an outline of policy manuals. Check with nearby programs and request copies of their policies to use as a guide; acquire some of the manuals listed in the Resources section of this booklet. For further guidelines on developing a personnel policy, consult **Technical Assistance Paper No. 7, "Finding and Keeping the Right Staff."**

The following are some tips for setting policies and procedures:

- Set the rules up as **early** as possible.
- Keep the policies very **broad and simple.**
- Procedures should be **uniform** and created only to solve problems or avoid situations that could be complicated or troublesome.
- Policies and procedures should have a **life of their own,** not be arbitrarily decided by individual discretion.
- The reasons for policies and procedures should be **valid** and **justified.**
- Once created and adopted, policies and procedures should be firmly and consistently **adhered** to.
- If exceptions are made, the reasons must be **sound** and **defensible.**
- There should be a mechanism for changing policies and procedures, and the **flexibility** to permit and accept change.

Policy decisions should be formally voted upon and adopted by the board, director, staff, or a combination of all of them. Setting the rules is only a first step. In order to be followed, policies and procedures must be disseminated to those whose cooperation is needed: the community, board, director and staff, parents and children. A parent handbook, personnel manual, and manual of operating procedures are all important tools for making sure that, once decided, policies and procedures really work.

You may want the help of a lawyer to guide you through this process, especially if you want to obtain tax-exempt status. Try to find someone who will help you for a reduced fee or "pro bono." Ask around at nearby human service and day care programs to find a lawyer who has experience with nonprofit organizations.

Unless your program is being operated by a public or private school system, you will probably need to obtain a license. Contact the licensing unit of your local or regional Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for a copy of the regulations and information on the licensing process. If you are not sure which office serves your area, you can call the central office of DCFS at (217) 785-2688.

Accidents can happen, and, unfortunately, they sometimes do. Parents of an injured child may sue the center. It is imperative that all school-age child care programs obtain appropriate insurance as a preventive measure to guard against the potentially devastating financial impact of a lawsuit.

In the past few years, there have been drastic changes in the insurance situation for programs serving children. Eligibility has been restricted, fewer companies now offer coverage, and rates have increased, sometimes dramatically. Sometimes programs can be covered by a sponsoring institution, which simply extends an existing "umbrella" policy. If you have questions about insurance for your program, or are having trouble paying the cost, the local licensing unit of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services may be able to assist you.

Below are some types of insurance you should consider for your program:

General Liability. Comprehensive general liability insurance provides coverage for any negligence which happens either at the center or on a field trip. It is generally recommended that a program carry "blanket liability coverage" of $1,000,000. Licensing regulations require a single limit minimum amount of $100,000 per occurrence.

Accident. Since liability insurance covers only those injuries which are the result of negligence, it is desirable for a program to also consider accident insurance. This covers medical expenses for any injury. Some programs require that families purchase a 24 hour accident insurance policy, which is available through the schools.

Automobile. If you transport children, even occasionally, it is important to carry adequate automobile insurance. The following are suggested as minimum coverage:

- Injury per person: $100,000
- Injury per accident: $300,000
- Injury Property damage: $5,000

Fire and Theft. This may not be necessary for your program; check with other nonprofit agencies in your area and your insurance agent. If, due to a high crime rate, theft insurance is hard to obtain in your area, you may qualify for federal crime insurance with low-cost premiums.

Fidelity Bonds. This coverage protects the program from stealing or embezzlement by employees and is low cost.

Directors' and Officers' Liability/ Employee Liability. A general liability policy protects the corporation; these policies (which may simply be additions of "added insureds" to a general liability policy) will help protect individual staff or board members who may be charged with negligence in their duties. Directors can also be protected through an indemnification resolution in the corporation's bylaws, which states that no officer or director will have to pay money due to an action of the organization.

Resources

Baden, Ruth K., Andrea Genser, James A. Levine, and Michelle Seligson. ***School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual.*** Auburn House Publishing Company, Dover, MA: 1982. (Available from: School-Age Child Care Project, Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA 02181. $18.95.)

Chapman, Terry S. et al. ***Am I Covered for...? A Guide to Insurance for Non-Profits.*** Society for Nonprofit Organizations. (Available from: Society for Nonprofit Organizations, 6314 Odana Road, Suite 1, Madison, WI 53719. $10.50.)

Christian, Walter P., and Gerald T. Hannah. ***Effective Management in Human Services.*** New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1983. $36.00.

Cohen, Abby J., Esq. ***School-Age Child Care: A Legal Manual.*** School-Age Child Care Project and Child Care Law Center, 1984. (Available from: School-Age Child Care Project, Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA 02181. $25.00.)

Day Care Council of New York. ***Handbook for Day Care Board Members.*** Revised 1984. (Available from: Day Care Council of New York, Inc., 22 West 38th Street, New York, NY 10018. $12.00.)

Edgar, Jim, Secretary of State. "A Guide for Organizing Not-for-Profit Corporations". (Available from: Secretary of State, Corporation Department, Centennial Building, Third Floor, Springfield, IL 62756. Free of charge.)

Murray, Kathleen and The Child Care Law Center. ***Child Care Center Legal Handbook.*** ($30.00) Many other publications, including: "Insuring Your Program: Liability Insurance" ($3.00); "501(c)(3) Tax Exempt Status — And How To Get It" ($3.00); "How to Find and Use a Lawyer" ($2.00). (Available from: Child Care Law Center, 625 Market Street, Suite 915, San Francisco, CA 94105.)

Neugebauer, Roger, editor. ***Child Care Information Exchange.*** Six issues per year, $25.00. (Available from: CCIE, P.O. Box 2890, Redmond, WA 98073. Reprint 12, "Board Effectiveness," $2.50.)

Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois #68106 — 7M — 4/88

FIGURE 3

Suggested Outline for Handbooks

Operating Procedures

A. Program Description
B. Organizational Chart
C. Philosophy and Services Provided
D. Licensing
E. Sources of Funding
F. Purpose of the Manual, including procedures for revision
G. Health and Safety
H. Admissions Policy and Procedures
I. Service Delivery

Personnel Handbook

A. Purpose of the Handbook
B. Personnel Practices
  Equal Opportunity/ Affirmative Action guidelines
  Recruitment/Hiring
  Job Descriptions
  Probation
  Evaluation
  Grievance
  Termination
C. Financial Information
  Payday and Pay Periods
  Salary Ranges Salary Review
D. Leave Accrual and Use
E. Time and Attendance
F. Pay and Benefits
G. Ethical Standards
H. Orientation and Training
I. Use of Facilities
J. Communication
K. Job Descriptions

Parent Handbook

A. Program Philosophy
B. Description of Services and General Policies
  Hours and Type of Service
  Release of Children
  Enrollment Procedures
  Discipline
  Meals and Snacks
C. Financial Issues
D. Parent Roles and Responsibilities
  Communication
  Volunteers Involvement
  Clothes, Food, etc.
E. Health and Safety
F. Snow Days
G. Vacation and Long Days
H. Staff and Board
I. Day Care Calendar

Adapted from: "Devotion Primary Extended Day Program" Parent Handbook, Brookline, Massachusetts, and *Effective Management in Human Services*, Walter Christian and Gerald Hannah, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1983.

Part III. Legal Issues

Programs need to safeguard the well-being of the children they care for, and protect the program and the people who run it. Clarifying legal issues and establishing legal responsibility is one way of ensuring accountability. This section will briefly discuss the process of incorporation, licensing requirements, and insurance.

A. Incorporation as a Nonprofit Organization and Tax Exempt Status

Becoming a proprietary (for-profit) or nonprofit corporation can be a way of providing protection and financial benefits to the program during its operation. Incorporation helps to legally protect you and any others responsible for the program, especially from personal financial liability. If you are under an umbrella organization, such as a school, church, or Y, which is already a legal corporation (and probably tax exempt), you may not need to initiate this process.

If incorporated as a nonprofit organization, the group can seek *tax-exempt status.* This means that the program will not have to pay federal or state income taxes or state sales tax. Tax-exempt status is particularly important when it comes to fundraising, because it enables the group to receive tax-deductible contributions from donors.

The steps in the process are:

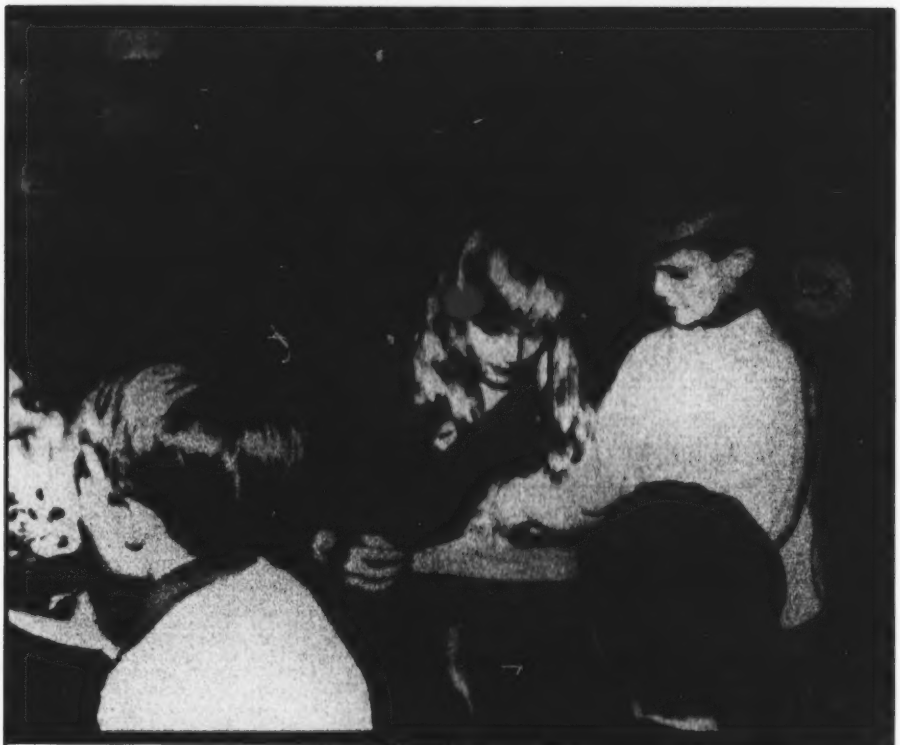
Step 1: Apply to the Secretary of State to obtain status as a corporation. The forms can be obtained from:

Secretary of State
Corporation Department
Centennial Building
Third Floor
Springfield, IL 62756
(217) 782-7880

Assuming that you choose to have a nonprofit status, you will receive form NP-102.10, the "Articles of Incorporation." Included in the Articles of Incorporation are the following:

- The name of the corporation.
- The names of members of the board of directors.

(continued on page 5)



(continued from page 4)

- The date of your annual meeting and date of the end of your fiscal year.
- A statement of the purposes of the organization and its legal powers.
- The organization's membership and their rights and duties.
- A verification that written bylaws have been adopted.

If you are planning on applying for *tax-exempt status*, you should be aware of this when describing the purposes of the organization (see Step 3 below). The bylaws of an organization spell out the rights and duties of the members of the corporation, the board of directors, and program personnel. Bylaws provide a codified framework for the way your program will conduct business: its rules, the way in which decisions are made, the delegation of power and authority.

Once the bylaws and the Articles of Incorporation are completed, two copies should be mailed to the above address, along with a filing fee. In a few weeks, you will receive a stamped copy of your application and a certificate of incorporation if your request is approved.

Step 2: Record the Corporation. Within 15 days of receiving approval, you must file with the office of the Recorder of Deeds in your county.

Step 3: File for Tax Exempt Status. You must now fill out Form 1023, and attach to it certified copies of both your corporate bylaws and your Articles of Incorporation. Obtain Publication 557, "How to Apply for and Retain Exempt Status for Your Organization," and Form 1023 from:

Internal Revenue Service
Room 611
320 West Washington
Springfield, IL 62703
(800) 424-1040 Toll Free or
(217) 789-4220

Under amendment 501(k) of the tax laws, child care programs applying for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status must meet the following two criteria:

1) Substantially all care provided is for the purpose of allowing parents to be gainfully employed.
2) Enrollment is open to the general public.

Sometimes school-age programs apply as educational organizations or charities rather than as child care programs.

There is no fee. You will be notified by the IRS in approximately two months. If your corporation receives approval for exemption from federal income taxes, it is also exempt from Illinois income tax. No separate application is necessary.

Step 4: Apply for exemption from state sales tax. Write a letter of request to the Illinois Department of Revenue, and enclose copies of your articles of incorporation, bylaws, constitution (on agency letterhead stationary), IRS exemption letter, and any other documents which may help to determine your status as an organization formed exclusively for child care, charitable, religious, or educational purposes. Mail to:

State of Illinois
Department of Revenue
Sales Tax Division
101 West Jefferson
Springfield, IL 62794
(800) 732-8866 Toll Free or
(217) 782-3336

Step 5: Register with the Illinois Attorney General. To find out whether your organization must register, check with the Attorney General's Office:

Illinois Attorney General
State of Illinois Center
Division of Charitable Trust and Solicitations
100 West Randolph, 12th Floor
Chicago, IL 60601
(312) 917-2595

Step 6: Comply with legal reporting requirements.

- If your corporation is nonprofit and tax-exempt, each year you must file an Annual Report with the Secretary of State.
- File necessary reports with the Internal Revenue Service, Illinois Department of Revenue, and the Illinois Attorney General's Office. Required reports will vary depending upon your status as an organization; check with the individual agencies to find out what you need to do.
- Obtain a Federal Employer Identification Number by filing Form SS-4 with your District Internal Revenue Service.
- File Form UC-1, "Report to Determine Liability," with:

  Illinois Department of Employment Security
  401 S. State St.
  4th Floor
  Chicago, IL 60605
  (312) 793-9874

January 1988 Technical Assistance Paper Number 4

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Money Matters

Financial Management of School-Age Child Care Programs

James R. Thompson, Governor

Gordon Johnson, Director

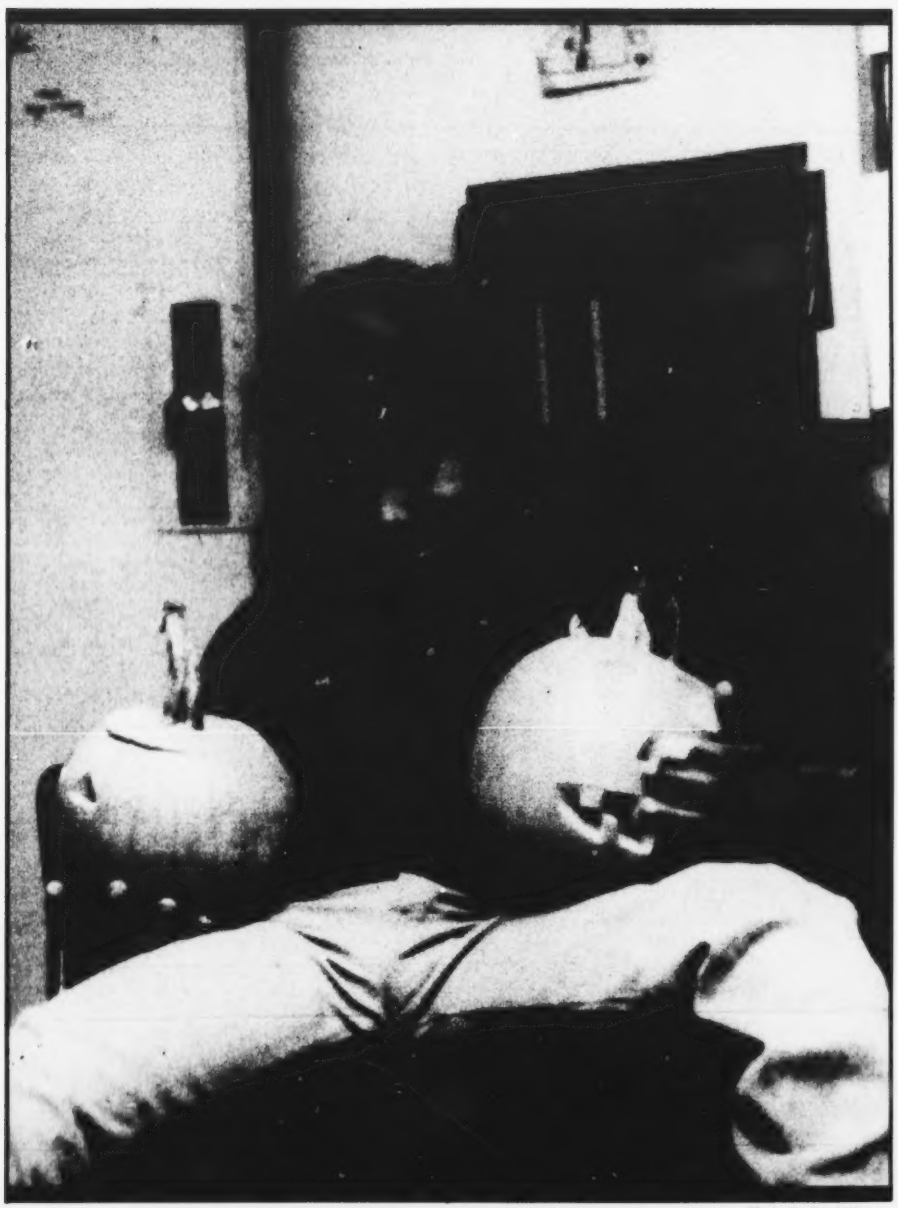


Photo: Joellen Hillyer

All our dreams and aspirations for what we want to accomplish for children, for families, for staff and for the community are expressed in the budget in the language of money. Every line item in the budget is a policy decision which directly determines what the program will be. Whoever makes the budget makes the policy decisions.

— **Gwen Morgan,** Managing the Day Care Dollars: A Financial Handbook

Section I: The Budget Process

Perhaps understandably, people who pride themselves on their ability to care for and understand children rarely have confidence in themselves as "number crunchers." They would just as soon leave worrying about assets and liabilities to someone else and concentrate on the *real* work of the program, caring for kids. However, as the quote above makes clear, those who follow their desire to avoid the quantitative side of the world do so at their own peril. Eventually, they will find themselves with neither the program they envisioned nor the dollars to create it.

The purpose of this paper is to take the hocus-pocus out of financial planning for school-age child care programs. It is a step-by-step tour through the process of creating and maintaining a financial structure for the program you want to offer. Several excellent resources, which will prove invaluable in actually setting up and maintaining your financial system, are listed at the end of this publication.

What is a Budget?

A budget is a calculated plan of expected income and expenses. It is not a record of what actually happened, but your best estimate of what is likely to happen; as such, it provides a way for performance to be measured against projection. See Figure (1) for some questions you might want to ask yourself before preparing a budget.

If you are starting a new program, or adding a new component to an existing one, you will need to distinguish between the regular ongoing costs of program operation and the special expenses associated with starting a new program from scratch. Your *start-up budget* will reflect one-time-only expenses. You might, for example, have to renovate the space you plan to use or purchase equipment, and may incur other costs in the process of meeting the standards.

During the planning period before you enroll children, you will also have staff salaries and other expenses to pay. When you finally open your doors, no matter what the demand in your community, it is most unlikely that your program will be fully enrolled. **Most programs take about six months to work up to full enrollment,** but during this time they must still pay for rent, utilities, and other "fixed" costs.

Your *start-up budget* is a separate financial plan that considers all of the one-time-only costs – renovation, staff salaries in advance of opening, advertising – and that accounts for the underenrollment that will probably occur. But you should also have a *projected operating budget*, a plan that lets you estimate what your expenses and income will be for a full year, after your program has achieved some stability. See Figure (2) for a sample start-up and operating budget.

Who should prepare the budget? Since the budget and the program offered to children are so closely linked, the budget should encompass the different perspectives of all those involved with the program – parents, teachers, board members, and others. Opening up the budget-making process insures that everyone has a chance to provide input and has an investment in the final document. In the end, it is recommended that one person or a small committee, depending upon your program structure and philosophy, be responsible for actually drawing up the final version and presenting it to the appropriate "governing body" for approval.

FIGURE 1

Budget Planning Questions

- Who is the program for and when will it operate? How many children? What ages? Can the program accommodate children with handicaps? What hours will the program be in operation? What days?
- What will the activities be? Are there programs and activities in place that the program will tap into, or must the program provide all of its own? What will they be, and what is needed to carry them out?
- Where will the program be housed? What costs are involved in renting, purchasing, and upkeep of the space? What about custodial fees and utilities?
- What is the need for transportation? How will children get to and from the program? Is other transportation necessary?
- What donated goods and services does the program have? Or expect to obtain?
- What teacher:child ratio and group size has been decided upon?
- Who will work in the program? What will the staff development program look like? Will volunteers, student teachers, work-study students be used?

Personnel Issues

Most programs find that their toughest budgeting problems are related to personnel. In the best of all possible worlds, you would staff your program with as many full-time, well-qualified caregivers as your ideal staff:child ratio and group size suggests. You would pay staff at a high rate, offer generous benefits, allow for ample *paid* meeting, planning, and training time, and not overload staff by burdening them with too many responsibilities. In reality, most school-age child care programs have limited funding and must make tradeoffs. Technical Assistance Paper No. 7, **"Finding and Keeping the Right Staff,"** will provide some pointers for this process.

Sometimes people think that by employing only part-time workers and not offering vacation, sick days, and health insurance they are doubling their savings. However, money saved by skimping on personnel costs will most likely result in high turnover, low commitment, and low morale. It is essential that *paid* time be built in for staff meetings, planning with team members, parent conferences, staff supervision, and other staff development and training activities. These are factors that will have a long-term impact upon the stability – and hence the quality – of the program.

Programs that are most successful in attracting top-notch staff, *and* in retaining them, hire caregivers as full-time personnel. This may seem difficult, if not impossible, to do in many school-age child care programs because of the limited number of hours of operation (for example, 3:00 to 5:30 P.M.). Programs that try to employ as many full-time personnel as possible use three major approaches to staffing: *split-shift systems; staggered, overlapping shifts;* and *job-combining*. You can combine these possibilities as it best suits you and your program.

In a *split-shift system*, the work day is divided. Typically, a person might work from 7:30 to 9:30 A.M., and then return to work from 3:00 to 5:30 P.M. The concept of a *staggered shift plan* is that as many staff as possible work full time in overlapping shifts. This type of system is used most effectively in programs that provide care for a full day. A *job-combining system* is one in which a number of tasks are performed by one person in order to have as many full-time employees as possible. The most common use of this practice is found in many small, one-site programs, in the person of a teacher-director. Or, in a multi-site program, a group worker or site director from one location may also serve as the all-program "curriculum coordinator."

Most programs will also need to hire some part-time staff. Volunteers or low-cost staff, such as work-study students are also utilized by many school-age child care programs, but they should be viewed as a **supplement** to the stable, long-term core of employees.

FIGURE 2

Sample Start-up Budget

REVENUE		
Advance Deposits from Parents		
Parent Fees		
Contributions		
Grants		
Fundraising		
Other		
TOTAL REVENUE		
EXPENSES		
Staff (for planning period)		
Staff (for start-up period)		
Fringe @ 16%		
Consultants		
Educational Supplies		
Office Supplies		
Rent or Mortgage		
Deposits		
Utilities		
Staff Training		
Equipment		
Vehicles		
Insurance		
Publicity		
Advertising		
Other		
TOTAL EXPENSES		

Sample Operating Budget

REVENUE		
Parent Fees		
Department of Children and Family Services		
USDA Child Food Program		
Fundraising		
United Way		
Donations		
TOTAL REVENUE		
EXPENSES		
PERSONNEL		
Administration Salaries		
Direct Care Salaries		
Fringe @ 16%		
Consultants		
Substitutes		
SUB-TOTAL PERSONNEL		
NON-PERSONNEL		
Rent or Mortgage		
Utilities		
Maintenance		
Food		
Educational Supplies		
Other Supplies		
Equipment		
Insurance		
Other		
SUB-TOTAL NON-PERSONNEL		
TOTAL EXPENSES		

(Sample Budgets are adapted from *Managing the Day Care Dollars* by Gwen Morgan)

The Budget Process

Creating a budget is a **planning project.** It is a projection of all the dollars and resources which will come into your program (income) and how it will be spent (expenses). The following eight-step process is adapted from the *Child Care Information Exchange* (March 1984).

Step 1: Make a Wish List

At the beginning of each budget cycle, those who are planning the budget should sit down and consider what they want to accomplish in the next year. This is a chance to forget financial realities and focus on the purpose of the program; what would you choose to do if finances did not constrain your choices?

Step 2: Cost Out the List

For this step, you must figure out how much it will cost to continue any present activities, as well as any new expenditures arising from the "wish list." You can use two methods for this process: first, adding percentage increases to figures from the previous year, if you have been operating in the past; and secondly, estimating the costs of new activities for which past information is not available. For example, if you are adding a before-school component to your program, you can use the salary information from your after school program, if staff will be on the same scale, but you will need to estimate costs for breakfast (if served), materials, and added administrative costs.

Step 3: Allocate Income

Again, if this is not the program's very first budget, information from last year will prove very helpful. The first step in allocating income is to separate *restricted funds*, those that must be used for a specific purpose, from *unrestricted funds*. Restricted funds come with strings attached – a USDA subsidy must be spent on food, or perhaps you have received a grant from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services to expand your kindergarten component – whereas unrestricted income, including parent fees, can be used according to your best strategic plan.

When you figure out the anticipated income from **parent fees,** it is essential to understand the difference between the capacity of your program – *maximum potential income* – and actual utilization. Simply multiplying the number of children by the rate, by the days of operation in a

FIGURE 3

This Is A Budget Deviation Analysis Income and Expenditures

	A Year to Date	B Budget to Date	C Deviation B - A	D % Deviation $\frac{C}{B} \times 100$
REVENUE				
Tuition				
Donations				
Government				
Foundation				
Other				
Total revenues				
EXPENSES				
Salaries				
Payroll Tax				
Repairs and Maintenance				
Consultants				
Mortgage Interest or Rent				
Depreciation				
Licenses and Fees				
Insurance				
Telephone				
Utilities				
Supplies				
Equipment				
Food				
Travel				
Miscellaneous				
Total expenses				
BALANCE				

CALCULATIONS: A. *ADD* current month actual expenses to last month's year to date analysis
B. *ADD* current month budget to last month's year to date analysis.

From Gwen G. Morgan, *Managing the Day Care Dollars*

especially from government sources, which may reimburse programs up to several months after the service has been supplied. To learn how to calculate a cash-flow analysis for your program, consult Gwen Morgan's *Managing the Day Care Dollars.* (See Resources.)

Then do everything you can to improve your cash flow, including: developing and implementing an effective fee collection system; carefully timing your expenses; and adjusting costs during periods of low enrollment. Many school-age child care programs develop a cash reserve account – that is, a savings account to be used only for cash-flow purposes, and to which the funds are returned once the late payments arrive. The most important point is to know where you are headed and to be prepared with contingency plans.

There are some general operating principles that are common to programs that are well-managed financially, regardless of their administrative structure, size, or philosophy. See Figure (4) for some guidelines on financial "checks and balances" every program should have.

FIGURE 4

Checks and Balances for Financial Management

1. Build in checks and balances: all money that comes in and goes out should be recorded in a number of places. Ensure that people check one another.

2. Develop and use formal systems: set up systems for recording funds received and disbursed and make sure everyone uses them.

3. Draw clear lines of responsibility: break down tasks so they are manageable and assign them to the appropriate individuals within the program.

4. Make available all the information essential for decision-making; design your systems and written forms so that information is easy to find and understandable.

5. Always consider contingencies and set aside funds so that financial disaster can be averted.

6. Document all financial activities with detailed records.

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Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois #66106 — 7M — 4/88

year, will not result in a realistic estimate of income to be earned from parent fees. This "maximum potential" is larger than the actual amount you will receive, though you can minimize the difference.

Even the best financial managers have some losses due to unforeseeable circumstances, including family vacations, intervals between when one child leaves the program and another takes his or her place, and *bad debt* (money which you are owed but will never collect, for example, when a family leaves the program without reconciling their account).

Use last year's figures, if available, to calculate your *actual utilization rate* – the ratio of actual income to maximum potential income. To ascertain total income from fees:

No. of children x fees per child x utilization rate

A figure that is 80 to 90 percent of your maximum potential income is a good rule of thumb in estimating income from tuition.

Now "fill in the blanks" on your budget sheet. Put all the restricted funds in their proper place and mark them with an asterisk, to remind you that they cannot be moved to another line item or component. You can now allocate unrestricted funds, starting with the activities for which costs are clear, such as occupancy, and moving onto those which may vary or are new this year. If you have several program components, you can allocate unrestricted income on a percentage basis if this proves easier for you.

Step 4: Set Priorities

Now compare your income and expenses, sometimes called the "read it and weep" step. Actually, your expenses should be greater than your revenues, or you are not setting your sights high enough. On the other hand, the only activities you can actually undertake are those which you can pay for. Cost effectiveness – the extent to which activities pay for themselves – is one important criterion. However, if the component is serving a critical need in the community or is crucial to achieving your purpose as an organization, you may choose to provide it anyway, as long as you can find the money somewhere. For example, some programs use their before-school component to help finance a program for kindergartners.

Setting priorities is a matter of ordering the importance of the various activities on your "wish list." What can wait another year? What can be started at one site, to be expanded later if it proves successful? Strategical questions may also arise. Can the staffing pattern be reorganized to better utilize personnel funds? As a group process, this step may feel like a painful ordeal, but its importance cannot be overstressed. Remember, developing the budget is your once-a-year opportunity to step back from the daily realities and look ahead to map out the best route to where you want to go.

Step 5: Adjust and Balance

Now it's time to see what the next year will look like, given both your priorities and your constraints. Some numbers will still have some flexibility, and you can make the decisions now about the very best estimate for each item. Be aware, however, that a *"financial cushion"* will be important in being able to meet unanticipated expenses in the coming year.

Step 6: Approve

The approval process will vary depending on the type of center. The board of directors of a nonprofit center has responsibility for final approval. A program under public auspices may go to the school committee or another elected body. Or the executive director of a proprietary agency may review the budget submitted by a program director. In each case, members of the approving board or committee should not serve as a "rubber stamp." They have a responsibility to investigate whether or not each income or expense item is a realistic projection.

Step 7: Monitor and Amend

A budget is a projection, but the future always holds surprises. Some flexibility may be permitted, such as the shifting of a certain percentage of total costs from one item to another. As new conditions arise, the budget itself may need to be amended, but it should not be changed without serious consideration of the need to do so. Obviously, monitoring the budget will require a system of financial record-keeping and reporting which permits easy comparison of the projection with the reality. This process is explained further in Section II, Financial Management.

Some Tips About the Budget Process

1. Make sure you leave a comfortable margin of error when forecasting.

Overestimate all costs and understate all income estimates by 10 percent or more. Don't forget to factor in under-enrollment when you estimate income from parent fees. Fiscal conservatism may be frustrating due to its constraining effect, but optimism at the beginning of the year can lead to financial disaster by the end. At worst, if you follow this advice, you may find yourself in the enviable position of having a small surplus to expend near the year's end.

2. Almost anything you do brings with it the hidden cost of administration.

For example, have you figured in the additional time the program director will need to arrange all the new field trips you are planning? Do other activities require photocopying, or specialized staff training? Don't be fooled by what initially looks like a low-cost program component or activity. Make sure that you think of all the steps along the way, and always build in the costs of administration.

3. Do not skimp on personnel costs.

Since they are such a large part of any child care program budget (usually between 70 and 85 percent of all expenses) and are not fixed costs, budgetmakers may be tempted to cut corners when they set teachers' salaries and benefits. Since a qualified, dedicated staff is the key ingredient to insuring a quality program, short-run savings may very well not add up in the long run, and may even cost you your reputation.

Remember, too, that much of the time a teacher spends doing his or her job – meeting with parents, purchasing and making materials, arranging for field trips, planning – may not be spent directly with the children, but should be reflected in the budget. Cutting corners on non-teaching time, or expecting staff to donate it, leads to "burn-out," high turnover rates, and low morale.

(continued on page 5)

Photo: Joellen Hilbert

(continued from page 4)

4. Include in-kind donations of goods or services in the budget wherever possible.

Examples of in-kind donations include:

- Paper supplied by a neighborhood printing company.
- Visits by the librarian for weekly story-telling.
- Regular volunteers, including parents.
- The unbilled portion of an audit supplied by a CPA at reduced rate.
- Uncompensated time contributed by the director and other staff over and above the regular work day.
- Utilities or janitorial services contributed by a school department.

In order to be part of the budget, an estimated dollar value must be calculated for the donation. It should be balanced by including an "in-kind donation" line item on the expense side of the budget.

Section II: Financial Management

A budget is only as good as the system you devise to keep track of your finances. The information you collect will be of interest to funding sources in addition to the board, parents, and staff. Each program will need to develop its own system for financial management, but all will need to include policies and procedures for the following activities:

- Purchasing and Making Payments
- Receiving Payments
- Depositing Fees
- Parent Fee Collection
- Payroll
- Billing

Once you know exactly what information you will need, consult some guides to financial management (see Resources). If possible, get the aid of an accountant in designing a system that is right for your program.

All the care you have taken to document and record your actual expenses and income will pay off when it comes time to examine your current practices in terms of the budget projections. School-age child care programs should draw up monthly income and expense statements which serve as a summary of the month's financial activities. For each line item of your budget, the amount spent since the beginning of the fiscal year is compared to the amount you budgeted for the same year-to-date period (see Figure 3). This income and expense report will present the total picture – a snapshot – of how you are actually doing, compared to your budget for the same time period.

If your books are on a cash basis – they reflect actual transactions - your school-age child care program may appear to be in serious trouble when, in fact, a government check is late. This is not a problem with your budget, but it may cause serious problems with *cash flow*. If money isn't received as planned, a program will be unable to meet expenses; a shortage of cash can mean a payless payday for staff!

Cash-flow problems are usually a result of late payments. There is often a lag between the time money is paid out by the program and funds are received,

January 1988 Technical Assistance Paper Number 5

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Financial Resource Development:

Finding the Dollars to Create a Quality Program

James R. Thompson, Governor

Gordon Johnson, Director

If you are like many school-age child care programs, you are likely to find that the income-side of your budget has a hard time keeping up with your expenses. One of the greatest challenges of providing quality child care is finding the resources to pay for it. It's hard work, but it can be a lot of fun too, and in the process you will build a stronger program.

This booklet will help you to consider the options for resources, both public and private, which will help you balance your budget.

Most school-age child care programs depend on parent fees to provide most of their revenue; others receive large portions of their income from state contracts. Most successful programs diversify their funding base, searching out sources, both public and private, or enticing new funders where few exist. Fundraising can mean anything from a bake sale to a federal grant proposal, from an in-kind donation by the local business owner who prints your brochure to subsidized spaces contracted by the largest employer in the city.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Flat-Fee Systems	
• Flat-fee systems are the easiest to figure out and to implement.	• Parents unable to afford the flat rate are unable to use the program.
• Programs maintain close control over the amount of money to be collected – guesswork is at a minimum.	• No special consideration is given to single parents, those families with unusual medical expenses, or others in hardship situations.
• Everyone is treated the same – all tuition payments are equal. (Unless a sibling discount is given.)	• Flat-fee systems may discriminate on the basis of income.
	• Programs using flat-fee systems tend to be more homogeneous and less economically diverse, since all parent users must be able to afford the same fee.
Sliding-Fee Scales	
• Sliding-fee scales allow parents to pay according to their ability.	• Often, more families are eligible for the lowest payment than the program anticipated, and the scale will not generate the income needed.
• Parents with a wide range of incomes are encouraged to use the SACC program, thus resulting in a more diverse population.	• You don't really know from year to year or from month to month exactly how much money you will collect from parents.
• A uniform, fair system of fee reduction is used that is systematized and not based upon favoritism or whimsy.	• Some method of family income verification must be decided upon. Do programs need to require pay stubs, bank books, and legal statements regarding child support? Or is the honor system adequate?
• Once the original work is done, determining an individual parent's fee is fairly easy.	• It is often difficult to decide how particular financial hardship situations should be dealt with (special medical expenses, exorbitant rent, child with severe special needs).
	• Some parents may have negative feelings about a fee scale that treats people differently and allows for a range of tuition payments.
Scholarship Systems	
• Scholarship programs can allow some children to attend your SACC program who might be unable to do so otherwise.	• In most cases, scholarship programs are limited, based upon the amount of money raised.
• SACC programs can offer scholarships of some sort even if they raise just a small amount of money.	• Due to financial constraints, only those with extreme need may be able to receive any financial assistance.
• The availability of scholarships can be important to a family in extreme hardship or crisis.	• In order to have an ongoing scholarship program, programs must obtain and/or raise funds yearly to be used as tuition subsidy.
• A scholarship program may result in a more diverse group of children.	

From ***School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual***

Parent Fees

Your first and most obvious source of revenue is the tuition fees which you will collect from parents. There are three major systems that school-age child care programs can use to establish parent fees: (1) flat-fee structures, in which all parent users pay the same set rate for care; (2) sliding-fee systems, where parents pay on a graduated scale according to their ability; and (3) scholarship programs, which generally offer a tuition break to a selected number of parents, while the rest pay the full fee. Many programs or groups set up fee structures which are a combination of these methods. Figure (1) summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of all three systems.

Most groups face the dilemma of balancing the quality of programming they want against the ability of parents to pay tuition fees. Sliding-fee systems can help to achieve a balance between quality and affordability, especially in communities where the rates parents can pay vary widely. However, too many parents on the bottom end of your scale can undo your school-age child care program's delicate financial balance. To resolve the trade-off between quality and affordability you may need to generate income from other sources than parent fees.

The following three points should be considered when setting parent fees:

1. Fee structures should be tailored to the individual program and community. Consider both the incomes of families and the rates charged by your competition.

2. Simulate your fee system and ask yourself: "Can Ms. Jones, who has three children and is making $10,000, really afford to pay that much?"

3. If your resources are limited, don't be afraid to restrict your financial assistance to those with the greatest need.

The Schools

Schools have a special role to play in school-age child care. Schools can offer vital and varied resources to school-age child care programs, including space, utilities, transportation, insurance (inclusion in the school's liability and other policies), food (snacks and/or meals from the school's kitchens) and resource person-

nel (bilingual specialist, nurse, librarian, social worker.) In 1986-87, 72 Illinois school districts were making provisions for school-age child care, either by providing care themselves or in partnership with other agencies.

In many instances, public or private schools absorb the cost of most, if not all, resources, thereby enabling programs to maintain reasonable fees for parents. In some cases, schools charge fees to programs based on: (1) the amount of square footage used; (2) the number of hours a program spends on the school premises; (3) the number of children served, or licensed capacity; and (4) a flat rate or fixed amount.

If you use school space, try to negotiate the following: (1) Status as a priority tenant, with lower costs and more access to school space fees, or charges which reflect the program's actual use of the utilities or other services and ability to pay; (3) It is extremely important to have a written policy, which should include guidelines concerning the use of specialized nonclassroom areas such as gym, shop, home economics room, and playground. Try to have these resources donated; (4) The written agreement should also include policy statements about rental fees, vacation and holiday use, community use of school facilities, and any user fees.

Public Funds

Many programs, especially those that serve predominately low-income neighborhoods, simply could not exist without one or more forms of government funding. Funds from federal, state, and local government agencies can enable you to hire and train staff, to offer services to low-income families, and to provide nutritious snacks and meals.

By far the largest subsidy for child care in the United States is the **Child Care Tax Credit.** Parents can recoup between 20 and 30 percent of their day care costs, depending on income. An easy way to make your program more affordable is to inform parents who may be unaware of this important support to families. For further information on the tax credit, call the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) toll free at: 1-800-424-1040 and ask for Publication No. 503, "Child and Disabled Dependent Care."

The **Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)** provides subsidized day care to families through several different programs. Under *Site-Administered Contracts*, the DCFS awards contracts to school-age child care programs for a given number of spaces, called slots, which will be reimbursed at a negotiated rate. In the *Region-Administered* program, the contract is for services provided to a specific child. In both cases, families must meet income guidelines (under 80 percent of the state median) to qualify and must be employed or in job training.

The DCFS also funds services to some families where day care can prevent or alleviate the abuse and neglect of children in high risk families. Further information on state funding can be obtained by calling your Regional DCFS Office.

For program start-up and expansion, some groups have been able to utilize **Community Development Block Grant funds.** Contact the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs at (312) 917-6310. Others have benefited from various grants administered by DCFS. Local funding sources will vary from one city or county to another, and finding them will take a bit of detective work on your part. Contact your regional office of DCFS and speak to the Day Care Coordinator; contact the city or town community planning department; speak to school principals, school committee members, and the directors of local human service agencies.

ther or not their child is enrolled in the extended day program, can pay $5.00 for the supervision and entertainment provided.

- Evening presentations by well-known plant and gardening experts in the early spring. The audience was delighted with the evenings, and the day care program made over $2,000.

- An annual balloon launch which is the day care center's part in the school's spring fair. Cash prizes are awarded to both the finder and the launcher of the balloon found furthest from the school. Last year the program made $4,000 after expenses.

- Another program capitalizes on the natural curiosity of neighbors. For $5 each, ticketholders get tours of some of the grandest homes in the community. Last year, the program made $6,000 in ticket sales. Another $2,000 was raised in a related appeal to corporations, who were offered tickets as part of an annual fundraising letter.

- Each year a day care calendar is printed featuring art by the same children who then sell it door-to-door in the neighborhood, just in time for the holiday season.

How do you know if a fundraising project is worth doing? Once in a while an event nets a very small return, even after months of preparation. Roger Neugebauer, editor of *Child Care Information Exchange*, suggests this formula for determining whether a project is **cost-effective:** figure out all your expenses, and calculate the *maximum net income* you expect. Then divide the dollars to earned by the *person-hours* – both staff and volunteer – needed to complete the project. If the estimated dollar-per-hour figure is less than $10 per hour, the fundraiser is probably not worth the effort. In fact, each of the events listed above yielded over $100 dollars per person-hour.

Of course, most fundraisers have merits beyond the actual dollars they raise, and you need to take this into account as well. Many programs sell T-shirts and bookbags because they are excellent means of publicity for the program, whether or not they bring in a profit.

A Final Note

Do not be discouraged if your first attempts at fundraising – whether a foundation proposal or a bake sale – do not yield high returns. Employers and foundations are more likely to support a program with an established reputation; experience in the community will lead to expanded contacts and connections; and an annual fundraiser will be more successful in subsequent years, when you have figured out all the little steps which ensure a smoothly-run event.

Finding the resources to support a school-age child care program is not an easy task. In all but the most wealthy of communities, parent fees must be supplemented by fundraising of some kind. Savvy day care providers consider all the possible resources, including those which may not have funded child care in the past. They develop a strategy which highlights the unique qualities of the program, and the valuable benefits it provides to children, families, and the communities in which they live and work.

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Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois #86108 — 7M — 4/86

The Private Sector

The private sector refers to nongovernment-related funding sources, such as foundations (national and local), corporations (business and industry), community organizations (Lions, Junior League, Kiwanis, etc.), and individual donors. If you are going to approach the private sector, first obtain some of the excellent references listed in the Resources section (at the end of this booklet). Familiarize yourself with the steps involved in writing a proposal or developing a fundraising campaign. What you'll find below is a brief guide to the various sub-categories of the private sector and some tips on strategy.

Foundations

There are over 21,000 foundations of several different types in the United States. Most of them disburse funds to nonprofit groups, agencies, or institutions. Small community or family foundations, which typically focus their giving on a specific geographic area, are the most likely to assist school-age child care programs.

For example, Vermont's "Beyond Latchkey" program was established in 1986 under a grant from the Gannett Foundation's Community Priorities program. As a result of this project, the Childcare Resource and Referral Center was able to provide seed money and technical assistance for 8 new school-age child care programs serving 233 children.

By and large, foundations are not willing to provide *regular operating support* for any program, no matter how good that program is. They will provide support for *start-up costs*, such as renovation, but the program must then find other, more stable income for its ongoing programs. The United Way, which provides funding for operating costs to many child care programs, is a major exception to this rule.

Information about foundations can be obtained by visiting the foundation reference collection of a university or library. This well-organized, accessible resource is maintained by **The Foundation Center,** a professional organization that acts as a clearinghouse in the foundation world. (Call 800-424-9836 toll-free for an up-to-date referral to the collection nearest you.)

Once you have a developed a list of likely funding prospects, your chances

of having a proposal considered seriously will be greatly increased if you can arrange to meet with a foundation representative before submitting your proposal. It helps to have somebody who can assist in opening the foundation door to you, since many are besieged with applicants. A meeting with foundation staff will help you tailor your proposal in the most effective manner possible.

Whether or not you have a meeting, you will have to submit a proposal. Each foundation has a different format for the submission of proposals, so be sure to check this first. All foundations want to know:

- What you want to do.
- Why you want to do it (that is, why there is a real need for your service.)
- How you are qualified to do it.
- How and when you will do it.
- How much it will cost.
- How much money you want from them.
- How you plan to raise other funds during or after the grant period.

They want all of this information in a style that is **brief, clear, free of jargon, and personal.** A good proposal should be a document that is readable and usable by your board, staff, and by you. It should present a clear plan of action and results.

Corporations, Business, and Industry

Many employers are beginning to take note of the child care needs of their personnel – and how these demands affect job performance. The "three o'clock syndrome", when thousands of parents get on the telephone to check on their child's safe arrival home from school, has been recognized by many corporations.

Corporations may extend an already existing preschool child care center which is located on the worksite to include older children; sponsor a summer camp; initiate a corporate giving program to support a partnership with a community-based center or public school; support information and referral services for personnel; become involved in community development projects; or subsidize their employee's cost of child care by providing vouchers to be used at a program of the parent's choosing. Employers can also donate "in-kind" services and materials, by renovating a space, donating an audit, or giving the school-age child care program a typewriter.

For example, in Skokie, Illinois, Fel-Pro Incorporated utilizes 200 acres of nearby land for a summer camp serving the children of employees.

When you approach employers, make sure you spell out the benefits to them, whether in terms of increased productivity and employee morale or good public relations in the community. Be knowledgeable about what other nearby employers are doing. And be prepared to offer a concrete proposal that will fill a specific need. If you do not immediately receive a favorable response, don't give up; suggest some other (less costly) possibilities. Even "no" for an answer may pan out in the long run. You have done some valuable education and will be back the next year.

Community Organizations

Most communities have local chapters of national organizations such as the Junior League, Kiwanis Club, League of Women Voters, etc. In addition, there are other existing organizations or institutions (church groups, professional

(continued on page 5)

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organizations) that are involved in community affairs. These groups may not provide funding in the form of grants, but they can be invaluable in the provision of all-important donated resources: equipment, transportation, and especially **volunteers.** Members of these groups have helped to design and distribute needs assessments, organize fundraisers, get out publicity, and provided contacts in the business or philanthropic community which lead to financial support.

In many cities and towns, a directory of community organizations is published by the Chamber of Commerce, the city itself, or an agency such as the Association of Mental Health. Contact your local library for help in obtaining such a listing.

At times the impetus for supporting a school-age child care program comes from within the group itself. For example, a local branch of the League of Women Voters was concerned about the lack of school-age child care in a suburban community. The members took on setting up a program as their group's work for a year, dividing up the required tasks.

Individual Donors

You may find a few wealthy community members who are willing to contribute substantial sums of money to your program, or you may appeal to a larger pool of potential donors for smaller contributions. Requests may be in the form of one-to-one visits and tours of the center or a direct mail appeal. At one center, a letter announcing the annual fundraiser – tours of local homes – is combined with a request for donations. Many individuals and local businesses request a few tickets and send in a large donation.

Fundraising Events

Many school-age child care programs depend upon fundraising events for the majority of their non-tuition funding. Fundraisers can be highly successful, but they require a good deal of advance planning. Make sure that you have enough responsible volunteers in the project so that a few people aren't overburdened. Involving different individuals with clearly defined tasks will build a base of support for the project. Clearly define your audience to avoid misdirecting the fundraising effort. Some successful ideas from school-age child care programs around the country:

- Movies are shown every Wednesday afternoon, the "early release" day when school closes at noon. Parents, whe-

January 1988 Technical Assistance Paper Number 6

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Serving Children With Special Needs In A School-Age Child Care Program

James R. Thompson, Governor

Gordon Johnson, Director

Photo courtesy Project PLAE, Inc.

Who Are Children With Special Needs?

Every child has a unique personality and needs that are not identical to those of any other child. The best school-age programs treat each child who walks in the door as "special." But the expression "children with special needs" has come to have a more specific meaning than that, and for good reason. For many generations, individuals who suffered from a wide range of impairments or delays in the spheres of physical, mental, emotional, or sensory development were made to suffer the extra burden of being labelled "deaf and dumb," "mongoloid idiot," "cripple," and other pejorative and stigmatizing names. But even the term "handicapped," still widely in use, is thought by many to be inappropriate. It overgeneralizes about and casts in a negative light a vast and diverse range of persons who are more dissimilar than similar to one another – and who do not deserve to be characterized in a negative manner.

In recent years there has been a search for new language with which to discuss these aspects of human development. For now, "children with special needs" is a widely accepted non-stigmatizing expression which can refer to a variety of populations.

Enrolling Children With Special Needs

Although child care providers are not required to serve every child with every kind of disability, no child should be turned away simply on the grounds that he or she is "handicapped." All programs should expect to serve children with a range of special needs.

What effect do the special needs of children have on their participation in a school-age child care program? Certain special needs may interfere with a child's ability to participate in many parts of the curriculum; others may only interfere with a few activities; still others do not pose

FIGURE I

Courtesy Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center, Fairfax, California.

Considerations in Serving Special Needs Children

In order to serve special needs children in a school-age child care program as successfully as possible, you may need to reorganize your physical space, set up some training for staff, or make adjustments in your policies and procedures. At the outset, few programs will be able to answer "yes" to all the questions listed below. As you develop a plan to serve a wider diversity of children and families, you may want to use the ten items as the basis for a list of program objectives.

1. Are parents asked at the time of application about handicapping conditions or other special needs of their child?

2. Are there periodic conferences in which staff and parents can exchange observations about the child's participation in the program?

3. Do the school-age staff members have frequent communication with others who work with the child, including physicians, therapists, and teachers?

4. Do you have a director or group leader who, either by educational background or professional experience, is qualified to monitor the participation of children with the kinds of special needs being considered for enrollment?

5. Is there a staff development plan which includes courses and workshops to help staff increase their proficiency at working with children who have special needs?

6. Is there sufficient staffing to provide the extra supervision and support that may be required by a child with special needs?

7. Is the site accessible to those using wheel-chairs? Does the program have access to the kinds of specialized furniture, equipment, toys, games, and other materials that will allow for the child's maximum possible mobility and participation?

8. Where appropriate, are activities new to the child with special needs broken down and taught in small steps?

9. Are there strategies for fostering friendship and companionship for children with special needs, such as pairing or inclusion in a regular small group?

10. Do posters, books, movies, dolls, and other toys depict a world that includes disabled as well as nondisabled persons?

any difficulty at all. Naming a child's handicapping condition – let's say we're talking about an 8 year old girl with cerebral palsy, for instance – tells us almost nothing about how the child will function. In order to answer that question, we have to familiarize ourselves with the individual child's abilities.

Sometimes, too, one finds that it is not a child's disability which prevents participation, but the attitudes of adults or other children. Some might think, for instance, that a child who is fed through a tube should not be seated at the same snack table as everyone else. Others might think it unfair to adapt the rules of a card game to make it easier for a mentally retarded child to play. To successfully approach the question of the participation of special needs children in school-age child care, one needs to remember that obstacles to participation may at times come not from the child's special needs, but from the fears and preconceptions of others.

It is also important that enrollment policies not be built around preconceptions regarding parents. For instance, many programs give enrollment priority to parents who are employed over those who are not. But the needs of parents of disabled children for child care are not neccesarily based on employment. The demands of parenting a child with moderate to severe disabilities can be so extraordinary that the need for school-age child care as a form of respite can be as great for the parent who is not employed as for the one who works full-time. Such needs should not be overlooked by enroll-

Larry Lonas, U.S. Air Force.

ment policies developed without special needs children in mind.

Section 407.26 of the Illinois "Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers" specifies a number of steps which must be taken by any program enrolling children with special needs. It is particularly important that appropriate resource personnel – psychologists, speech therapists, physical therapists – be consulted so that their recommendations may be utilized in program planning.

Options for Programming and Funding

There are two types of child care which can be designed for children with special needs – *integrated* and *segregated*. In the former, children with special needs are included in programs along with their non-disabled peers. A segregated program is specially designed to meet the needs of a particular type of special needs population and is run exclusively for the benefit of those children. High quality programs of either type can serve the needs of children effectively – although some parents express a strong preference for one approach over the other.

Examples of Integrated (Also Called Mainstreamed) Models

In one city, independent nonprofit parent boards run the school-based Extended Day Programs in the grammar schools. For a number of years, the school department has had a policy of ensuring equal access for special needs children in these programs by hiring aides who give extra attention and support to the disabled children. In some cases, the aide works one-on-one with a child; at other times, a single aide has been able to facilitate the mainstreaming of several children with special needs. The special education department has absorbed these extra costs.

Another program, located in a rural, economically depressed area, has made an unusually strong commitment to the integration of children with special needs in its after-school and summer camp programs over the past several years. In recent years, half or more of its 30 to 35 enrollees have been students with special needs. While the largest numbers have had learning disabilities, there have also been children with cerebral palsy, emotional and behavioral difficulties, and other special needs. Support for the program, and the higher staff:child ratios required, has come from several sources. Various state agencies, including social services, mental health, and public health, have contributed funding for the program. Networking in the community has paid off too; therapists from a local counseling service work with a number of the children and their families.

Sometimes the integration of children with special needs does not require the addition of extra funds or staff, but merely good communication between parents and child care providers, and the motivation to make it work. This is the case, for instance, at one community center where a number of children with special needs have been included in preschool and school-age child care programs.

Another example is a program run by a non-profit organization which is particularly concerned with the needs of disabled children. It opened a recreational camp in the mid-1970's as a program exclusively for this group, but is now operating a fully integrated program serving 120 summer participants between the ages of 3 and 22, as well as 30 young people each day during the school year. The inclusion of children with a wide range of disabilities requires a staff which includes many specialists, including speech, occupational and physical therapists. The funds to pay for this specialized staff is built into everyone's tuition, regardless of whether their children will need such support. In addition to public subsidies, a tuition sliding-fee scale based on income, and a point system by which labor is traded for a fee reduction help keep the program affordable for many families.

Courtesy Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center, Fairfax, California.

Examples of Segregated Models

In one case, a local chapter of the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) developed an after-school program for mentally challenged children and adolescents from 8 to 22 years of age. A staff-to-child ratio of 1:4 is maintained. Parent fees are kept low by utilizing student workers from a nearby university. Funding from mental health agencies helps reduce parent fees, and the space for the program is donated by the ARC, which also absorbs all administrative costs of running the program.

A special school for emotionally troubled students runs its own "After-School Program" three days a week for its younger students, ages 6 to 11. The majority of funds come from state-mandated monies for segregated special needs schools. The afterschool program is supported because school administrators believe that certain skills are better developed in a more informal, arts and activity-oriented environment than in the school's classrooms. The staff-child ratio is maintained at 1:3.

An "Afternoons Program" in another area is an after-school activity program for adolescent and young adult clients with moderate to severe disabilities. The ratio of staff to participants is 1:2. The space has been donated by the local school system, with funding for staff salaries coming from the state's mental health department. The participants have mental retardation combined with various physical, sensory, and emotional/behavioral problems. (The same program also integrates a few clients into family day care homes with non-disabled children.)

Other Possible Models and Sources of Funding

It is clear from the preceding examples that there are numerous programming, administrative and funding models for serving school-age children with special needs. Other possible programs include:

Multi-site programs in public school districts in which both integrated and segregated models of care exist. These may be run by nonprofits, by school departments, or by public agencies, such as recreation departments. Parents, program staff, and school personnel work together to determine which setting will best serve the needs of each individual child.

Special foundation grants for integration. Some school-age child care providers have developed innovative strategies for the inclusion of children with special needs and raised the funds to implement these plans by writing proposals to private foundations. Some grants have paid the costs of extra staff; others have paid for consultants, equipment and other support needed for mainstreaming efforts.

Private school partnerships. Some private schools serving special needs populations have been interested in seeing their students involved in mainstreamed programs during their after-school and vacation times. They have cooperated with public schools, other public agencies, and nonprofit organization facilitate the development of such programs.

What About Staff Orientation and Training?

In general, without some special training, staff will not be able to meet the developmental needs of a disabled child. For example, a program that includes children in wheelchairs must train staff in particular areas of health and safety, curriculum development, and behavior management. Although critical, staff orientation and training does not have to be the intimidating factor which it sometimes appears. Experience has shown that communication between the parent of a special needs child and those who will work with that child, which includes information about the specific abilities and disabilities of that child, is often the key to success.

There are many sources of additional information and training in most communities. The following are some of the best:

- Special education department of local school district.
- Local college or university, special education, psychology, physical education, or related departments.
- Local hospitals that work with parents dealing with birth defects, chronic illnesses, etc.
- Advocacy groups such as Association for Retarded Citizens, Easter Seals, United Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome Congress, etc.
- Respite care agencies.
- Mental health centers.
- Pediatricians and pediatric nurses, including school nurses.
- Recreation or park department of town or city (ask if they have therapeutically trained staff).

Experience is What Makes Some into Experts

One mother of an adolescent with special needs, who also works with disabled children, has this friendly advice for those who would undertake the challenge of developing appropriate out-of-school programs that include all children: "We must treat all kids as kids first and then deal with what may or may not be different."

For both parents of a special needs child looking for a program and providers considering for the first time the possibility of enrolling a child with a disability, it is well to remember that nobody started out as an expert. Parents have often become experts (out of necessity) in the particular disability of their child by the time the child is of school age. But they didn't start off that way. Providers, given time and a chance to learn, will similarly become knowledgeable and resourceful in approaching children with special needs.

Physicians, therapists, special educators, and others whom such children see on a regular basis are responsible for monitoring their medical, psychological and educational progress. School-age child care providers have a different mission: to give children an environment in which to relax, to play, to make friends, to try new activities, and to feel good about themselves. If providers and parents both keep this in mind, and work together as allies, there is every reason to expect the inclusion of children with special needs in school-age child care programs to be an enriching and satisfying experience for all concerned.

Resources

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Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois #66106 — 7M — 4/88

January 1988 Technical Assistance Paper Number 7

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Finding and Keeping the Right Staff:

Personnel Issues in School-Age Child Care

James R. Thompson, Governor

Gordon Johnson, Director

Photo: Lou Arcovio

Nancy received her undergraduate degree in Visual Arts and is currently enrolled part-time in a Master of Fine Arts in Education program.

Paulo was a laborer in his native Portugal, but had trouble finding work upon arrival in the United States. He heard about the job from an advertisement on the local Portuguese radio program.

During high school, Pearl spent her summer vacations working at a camp for disadvantaged children. She went on to focus on outdoor education in college, and has a special interest in providing minority children with opportunities to experience and appreciate the out-of-doors.

Millie, a single parent of three, was a family day care provider for seven years. Although her formal credentials do not extend beyond a high school diploma, Millie received extensive training and supervision as a member of a family day care system.

All four are now valuable members of a school-age child care staff. They spend their workdays playing soccer, mediating disagreements, leading field trips...helping children to learn and grow. In the following pages, you will get a sense of the important characteristics of a good caregiver, how to find and hire someone who has them, and how to reduce staff turnover by creating a supportive work environment.

Who Are The Staff?

How do you know what to look for when hiring staff for a school-age child care program? Figure (1) describes some of the most important personal characteristics and skills in good staff. Of course, not every successful applicant will possess all of these qualities. Training and supervision should be designed to fill in any important gaps.

The exact make-up of any program's staff will depend on the program's goals and philosophy, as well as affirmative action considerations, the strengths and skills needed to round out a caregiving team, and the actual individual applicants seeking employment at a given time and place. For example, a school-age child care program which stresses visual and performing arts will seek out workers with particular skills in these areas.

The positions listed below provide an outline of the staff needed to run a high quality school-age child care program. Consult the resources listed at the end of this technical assistance paper for sample job descriptions, personnel policies, and other important information.

The following are some common staff positions in school-age child care programs:

- **Child Care Director.** This is the person responsible for staff supervision and administrative operation of the program.
- **Site Coordinator.** In multi-site programs, an individual is often assigned responsibility for reporting to the program administrator and supervising the daily running of the program at a particular location.
- **Group Worker.** The group worker supervises children, plans the curriculum, and has certain administrative responsibilities as well.
- **Child Care Assistant.** The assistant leader works under the group leader in planning and carrying out activities with children.
- **Substitutes.** Although administrative staff may help out when caregivers are sick or on vacation, it is best to develop a pool of other workers to call on.
- **Volunteers.** Low-cost, temporary workers, when adequately trained and supervised, can be a wonderful supplementary staff to a school-age child care program. See Figure (2) for a list of potential non-paid staff.

FIGURE 1

Characteristics of a Good Caregiver

A Good School-Age Child Caregiver:

...is warm and caring.
...has a good sense of humor.
...accepts and respects differences.
...has special interests and enjoys sharing them with children.
...is sensitive to children's individual needs.
...is reliable and responsible.
...creates links between the children and their community.
...respects and listens to children.
...challenges children's curiosity.
...models by participating in non-sex stereotyped behaviors and activities.
...is flexible.
...is good at fostering skills.
...can work as a member of a team.
...is committed to the program.
...understands the importance of working with parents.
...communicates well with others.
...enjoys participating in activities with children.
...understands and respects parents.
...is well-organized and plans in advance.
...encourages creativity.
...can tune in to what children are feeling, even when children have difficulty stating it themselves.
...has patience.
...praises often.

Skills of a Good Caregiver

A Good School-Age Child Caregiver:

...is responsive to the developmental needs of school-age children.
...can plan curriculum appropriate to each age group served.
...understands professional ethics, including confidentiality.
...knows how to help children solve their problems.
...can design a well-organized, appropriate space for school-age children.
...knows and can employ a variety of behavior management techniques.
...learns about and respects the culture and values of families in the program.
...can communicate effectively with parents and find ways to involve them in the program.
...knows how to plan activities for a full week or month; has good organizational skills.
...can communicate well with other professionals, including school staff.
...discourages sex-stereotyped behavior and makes all activities available to children of either sex.
...knows how to handle sensitive topics with honesty and understanding.
...sets and maintains reasonable, consistent limits.
...knows what activities are appropriate.
...can work well with large groups of children.

(Adapted in part from *School Age NOTES*, March/April 1985)

The Hiring Process

How is one to find someone with all the wonderful qualities listed in Figure (1)? Well, to start off, it must be admitted that this is not an easy task. Staff recruitment and hiring must be a priority for any program; as the program gets established, word-of-mouth will be a big help.

Since there is no single institution which provides a degree for qualified school-age child care teachers, the hiring process requires both creativity and flexibility. People qualified to work with school-age children often have gained relevant experience at summer camps or recreation centers. Others have worked in preschool child care settings, family day care homes, and social service agencies. Formal educational preparation which may be helpful includes a degree in any of the following: Arts Education, Physical Education, Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, Human Services, Social Work, or Recreation. On the other hand, licensed programs will need to pay attention to the specific educational requirements for various staff positions.

Steps in Designing a Hiring Process

Step 1: Decide who will be involved and how decisions will be made. The program director need not make these decisions alone. In many programs, current staff and parents have an important role in the hiring process. They may, for example, participate in interviews and choose the top candidates or make formal recommendations. Sometimes the hiring process varies depending on the position to be filled, as when a Board of Directors is more involved in hiring the Program Coordinator than in choosing an Assistant Group Leader.

Step 2: Draw up a job description. This clear, concise document should outline the tasks and responsibilities of the position, as well as the qualifications required. You may already have a job description for the position to be filled, however, make sure to specify the starting date, hours, salary, benefits, and time commitment required.

Step 3: Recruit applicants. The following methods have been used successfully by many programs:

- Posting job descriptions, with application information, at college and university placement offices.
- Advertisements or announcements at school meetings, such as the PTA, and on school bulletin boards.
- Using word-of-mouth – spreading the word through parents, current employees, and others.
- Advertising in newspapers.
- Listing the position in newsletters or on bulletin boards at human services agencies, for example, information and referral organizations, mental health centers, and groups which serve ethnic and racial minorities.
- Posting attractive notices in the community wherever potential candidates might see them.

Step 4: Screen candidates. In sorting through the resumes which you receive, you will need to balance experience with education. For example, how does someone who has spent the past six summers as a camp counselor compare to another applicant, one who has little work experience, but a master's degree in counseling and child development? Pay attention to the in-service training which someone has received as well; this often turns out to be even more valuable than a degree.

Consider how the candidate would complement the other program staff, in terms of personality, skills, training, ethnic and racial background, and specific needs of the children. You may want to formally prioritize certain qualifications. For example, a program serving many children from immigrant families wanted to hire a bilingual caregiver, and geared their recruitment and hiring process accordingly.

Step 5: Hold interviews. Your goal is to be able to compare candidates. Therefore, to the extent possible, the interview format should be formalized and standardized. See Figure (3) for a list of sample interview questions. Devise a standard form on which each interviewer can record his or her impressions of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses.

Step 6: Select finalists. Select two or three finalists, in accordance with your stated hiring procedures and priorities. Check references. In many programs, the finalists are interviewed for a second time, sometimes with a larger group of interviewers. Other programs require candidates to spend a certain number of hours at the program, so that the potential caregiver can be directly observed interacting with children.

Step 7: Make the final decision. The applicant you have selected should be offered the job, with a clarification of all the conditions, such as time commitment, pay, and benefits. You will need to comply with certain licensing requirements where applicable, such as health certification, a background inquiry, and educational

FIGURE 2

Sources of Supplementary Staff

- High school students enrolled in child development courses.
- High school students enrolled in youth employment programs.
- College work-study students.
- College students majoring in a related field, such as elementary or early childhood education.
- College students who volunteer as their community service.
- Senior citizens who donate their time to the program.
- Parents of children in the program.
- Community residents who come in to share specific skills and interests with the children, such as car mechanics or craftspeople.

5. Full Day and Outside Training

Many programs conduct intensive, full-day training at periodic intervals. The whole staff may go on a "retreat" to another location for workshops, meetings, and group-building experiences.
Some organizations are joining together on a regional basis to hold large annual conferences. In some cases, general day care conferences include sessions particularly devoted to school-age care issues; at other times, the conference is devoted to school-age child care alone.
In other cases, staff may take relevant courses at a college or university.

The options you choose in developing a staff training program will depend on the resources in your area and the needs of your staff. Contact the following organizations for further information on available training subsidies, upcoming workshops, courses, and conferences, and how to join or start a school-age consortium:

1. Call the Day Care Coordinator at your regional office of the **Department of Children and Family Services.** Ask about local training, as well as initiatives by the Office of Child Development.

2. Contact your local affiliate of the **Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children** (ILAEYC). To find your affiliate, call the National Association for the Education of Young Children toll free at (800) 424-2460.

3. Call your local **Cooperative Extension Office.** They have provided a great deal of support to school-age child care programs through their Home Economics component.

4. Contact the **Day Care Action Council of Illinois,** located in Chicago at (312) 561-7900.

Staff Evaluation

Evaluations, based on expectations which are clearly delineated in job descriptions, personnel policies, and individual goal statements, should take place at regularly scheduled intervals. All supervision, is, in a sense, a form of evaluation. Supervision should be given a high priority by setting aside uninterrupted, paid time for sessions for all staff. Your evaluation process will help staff learn where they need to improve and how to make those changes. Staff should also have an opportunity to evaluate the program.

Written evaluations are usually completed two or three times per year on standardized forms. Depending on their position and the program, staff may be evaluated in terms of the following: activities they have planned and led with children, the arrangement of the space, performance in management tasks, relationships with children and parents, relationships with school personnel, and ability to supervise and/or work with others. Often, evaluation forms consist of a list of desired characteristics and ratings for each on a numerical scale which ranges from "needs attention" to "excellent." In some programs, caregivers complete a self-evaluation which they then share with a supervisor.

Resources

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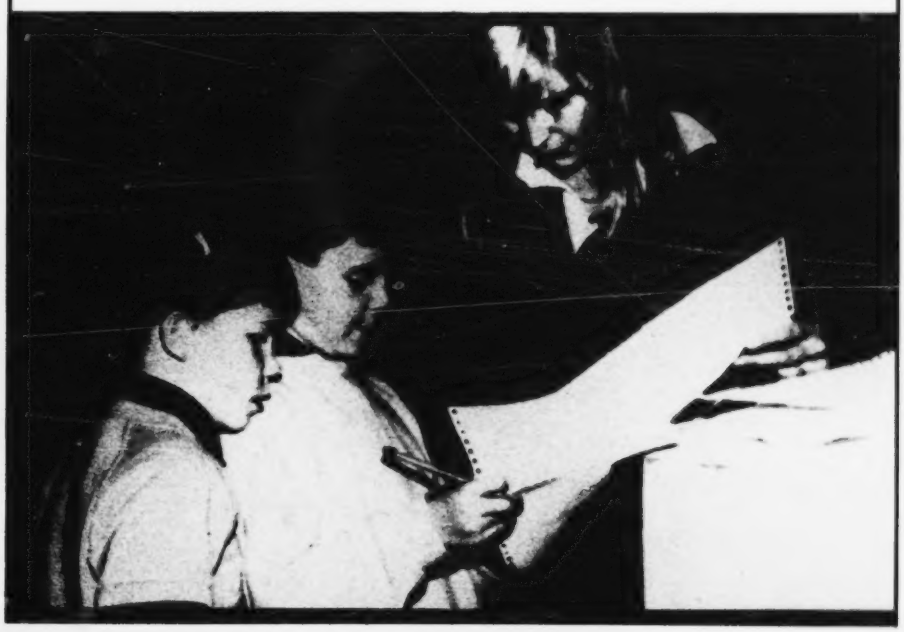
Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois #66106 — 7M — 4/88

FIGURE 3

Sample Interview Questions

- Please describe your experiences with children.
- Can you state some basic differences between a six-year-old and a nine-year-old?
- What special skills or strengths can you offer this program?
- Describe your experience in working with others as a team.
- Have you ever been in a crisis situation? How did you react?
- How would you rate your organizational abilities? Your ability to get along with co-workers?
- Please describe your experience working with people of different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- What would you do if:
  ...one child accuses another of cheating at a board game?
  ...a group of friends is teasing a new child in the program by calling him names?
  ...a toy is missing from a child's cubby at the end of the day?
  ...a child is failing in school?
  ...etc.
- How is school-age child care different from school?
- How might you set up the schedule for a typical day?
- Which methods of group management do you utilize the most?
- What is your philosophy regarding discipline?
- What specific ideas do you have for involving parents in the program?
- What is your greatest strength in working with children in this age group?
- Your greatest weakness?

(Adapted in part from *School-Age NOTES*, July/August 1981, and *School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual*)



requirements. (See the "Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers", Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.) If your first choice declines the position, you may offer the job to your second choice. However, settling for someone about whom you have doubts is a mistake you will regret! You may need to start the hiring process over.

Step 8: Begin the orientation process. You may find it helpful to compile an orientation handbook, which would include health-and-safety information, such as emergency procedures and fire exits, an organizational chart detailing lines of authority, procedures for release of children to leave the program, and other important program policies and procedures. Be sure to give the new staff person time to adjust and ask questions; don't expect him or her to take on full job responsibilities for at least a few days.

Quality of Work Life

Hiring good people is only the first step in building a quality program. Unfortunately, those who do the important work of caring for children often receive little in the way of compensation or status. Fair, comprehensive personnel policies, salaries as high as possible, and fringe benefit packages all help to let staff members know that they are respected and valued. When caregivers choose to remain at the program, the result is low staff turnover and good continuity for children. Continuity of care is a key factor in determining the quality of children's experience in a program.

The following are some suggestions, adapted from the Child Care Employee Project's "Child Care Employee Handout No. 11: Special Stresses of School-Age Child Care Work," and *School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual* (see Resources):

- Choose a staffing pattern which maximizes the number of full-time staff.
- Provide fringe benefits, especially health insurance. For part-time staff, payments may be pro-rated by the number of hours worked.
- Ensure that personnel policies conform with all legal requirements, including those for breaks, compensation, etc.
- Schedule regular staff meeting times and invite all staff to contribute to the agenda.

(continued on page 5)

(continued from page 4)

- Provide regular training (see "Staff Development" below).
- Develop a career ladder for experienced staff.
- Join other child care providers and advocates in seeking improved funding for children's services.
- Keep staff: child ratios as low as possible.
- Develop interesting individualized assignments for volunteers, work-study students, and other supplemental staff; do not simply expect them to "fit in."
- Get the local media to do occasional stories on your program. This not only makes everyone involved feel more recognized and important, but also builds your reputation in the community.
- Involve all staff in decision-making.
- Create a place where staff can go to be away from the children on their breaks, even if you have to renovate an old closet.
- Compensate staff for time spent in parent meetings, training, and other responsibilities that take place outside of regular working hours.
- Examine the disparities between salaries and benefits for administrators and those for direct care staff, and decide whether the differences are justified.

Staff Development

We are only able to have staff meetings three times a year because staff schedules are staggered. On occasion, we may hire someone especially to show a film to all the children so that the staff can have a meeting...

There are some courses at one of our local colleges that our staff would like to take, but the tuition is over $300 per course and with the salaries we make, it just seems out of reach...

We'd love to have a consultant come in and work with us on a regular basis, but our project just doesn't have money in the budget for that sort of thing...

In many programs, it is difficult for staff to find time or money for staff development and training activities. At the same time, it is often hard to hire staff who have previous training or experience in school-age child care.

High quality school-age child care programs usually have a planned, organized approach to staff supervision and training, which includes both frequent, regular staff meetings and training opportunities outside the program.

Components include:

1. Supervision

Individual supervision by directors or site coordinators usually occurs on a weekly or monthly basis. Large programs, which have a number of staff members in similar positions, sometimes opt to have group supervision meetings. For example, in one program that has four different locations, all site coordinators meet with the director weekly for group supervision.

2. Staff Meetings

Caregivers may gather either in teams or as an entire staff, but some regularly scheduled time to meet is imperative for quality programming. Activities for staff meetings include:

- Planning the curriculum for the upcoming week or month. Staff may want to choose themes on which to base activities and events.
- Discussing the needs of individual children in the program. This often occurs in consultation with the director or a counselor from the local community mental health center.
- Workshops on topics of interest, by outside speakers or presented by the staff themselves.
- Discussions and brainstorming sessions, potluck dinners, and other social get-togethers.

3. Visiting Other Programs

In a field as young as school-age child care, written materials and academic training may be hard to find, but a great deal can be learned by sharing resources between programs. In one center, staff were given two annual "observation days" as part of their fringe benefit package, time specifically set aside to expand their horizons through visits to other programs.

4. Local Training Consortiums

In some parts of the country, groups have formed to provide training for staff in a number of centers. Activities include: workshops with speakers from different agencies; discussion topics to which all contribute; resource-sharing; salary surveys, teacher "exchanges," and, in one case, a field day for staff and children from all the member programs. These meetings and workshops also serve to break down the isolation of child care staff and build a professional identity.

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Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois
#86106 — 7M — 4/88